ALCIPHRON:

OR, THE

Minute Philosopher.

IN

SEVEN DIALOGUES.

CONTAINING

An Apology for the Christian Religion, against those who are called Free-Thinkers.

They have for saken me the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Jerem. ii. 13.

Sin mortuus, ut quidam minuti Philosophi censent, nihil sentiam, non vereor ne hunc errorem meum mortui philosophi irrideant. Cicero.

DUBLIN:

Printed for THOMAS WATSON, Bookseller, at the Poets Heads in Caple-street.

M,DCC,LV.

ADVERTISHMENT

The first of the straight of the second of t

TOUR AND THE STATE OF THE STATE

To train on the remaining to the second seco

- 1 7 7 2 to 1 4

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author's Defign being to confider the Errording Lights of Atheift, Libertine, Enthusiast, Scorner, Critic, Metaphysician, Fatalist, and Sceptic, it must not therefore be imagined, that every one of these Characters agrees with every individual Free-thinker, no more being implied, than that each Part agrees with some or other of the Sect. There may possibly be a Reader who shall think the Character of Atheist agrees with none: But though it hath been often faid, there is no fuch thing as a Speculative Atheift; yet we must allow, there are several Atheists who pretend to Speculation. This the Author knows to be true; and is well affured, that one of the most noted Writers against Christianity in our Times, declared, he had found out a Demonstration against the Being of a God. And he doubts not, whoever will be at the pains to inform himself, by a general Conversation, as well as Books, of the Principles and Tenets of our modern Free-thinkers, will fee too much Caufe to be perfuaded that nothing in the ensuing Characters is beyond the Life.

A2 THE

winder range Billion I cathad to Aleka a mart free to be a superior of the state of the superior to be a superior they have being a continue to the first of the continue of the growth of the state of the stat ermon and a second second second second second context that there is a standard to the second and the last to the wheel he we also eria el 1861 de la como en grado en como en 1860 de la como en 1860 de retti alim appendi ta di ta di mandi mila aratico

CONTENTS.

The FIRST DIALOGUE.

SECT. 1. Introduction.
2. Aim and Endeavours of Free-thinkers.

3. Opposed by the Clergy.

4. Liberty of Free-thinking.

5. Farther Account of the Views of Free-thinkers.

6. The Progress of a Free-thinker towards Atheism.

7. Joint Imposture of the Priest and Magistrate.

8. The Free-thinkers Method in making Converts and Discoveries.

9. The Atheist alone free. His Sense of natural Good and Evil.

10. Modern Free-thinkers more properly named Minute Philosophers.

11. Minute Philosophers, what fort of Men, and how educated.

12. Their Numbers, Progress, and Tenets.

13. Compared with other Philosophers.

14. What Things and Notions to be esteemed natural.

15. Truth the same, notwithstanding Diversity of O-

16. Rule and Measure of moral Truths.

The SECOND DIALOGUE.

Sect. 1. Vulgar Error, that Vice is burtful.

2. The Benefit of Drunkenness, Gaming, and Wbo-

3. Prejudice against Vice wearing off.

A 3

4. Its

- 4. Its Usefulness illustrated in the Instances of Callicles and Telesilla.
- 5. The Reasoning of Lysicles in behalf of Vice, ex-
- 6. Wrong to punish Actions, when the Doctrines whence they flow are tolerated.
- 7. Hazardous Experiment of the Minute Philosophers.
- 8. Their Doctrine of Circulation and Revolution.
- 9. Their Sense of a Reformation.
- 10. Riches alone not the public Weal.
- 11. Authority of Minute Philosophers: Their Prejudice against Religion.
- 12. Effects of Luxury: Virtue, whether notional?
- 13. Pleasure of Sense.
- 14. What fort of Pleasure most natural to Man.
- 15. Dignity of Human Nature.
- 16. Pleasure mistaken.
- 17. Amusements, Misery, and Cowardise of Minute Philosophers.
- 18. Rakes cannot reckon.
- 19. Abilities and Success of Minute Philosophers.
- 20. Happy Effects of the Minute Philosophy in particular Instances.
- 21. Their free Notions about Government.
- 22. England the proper Soil for Minute Philosophy.
- 23. The Policy and Address of its Professors.
- 24. Merit of Minute Philosophers towards the Public.
- 25. Their Notions and Character.
- 26. Their Tendency towards Popery and Slavery.

The THIRD DIALOGUE.

- Sect. 1. Alciphron's Account of Honour.
 - 2. Character and Conduct of Men of Honour.
 - 3. Sense of moral Beauty.
 - 4. The Honestum or to nanov of the Ancients.
 - 5. Taste for moral Beauty, whether a sure Guide or Rule.

6. Minute



- 6. Minute Philosophers ravished with the abstract Beauty of Virtue.
- 7. Their Virtue alone difinterested and beroic.
- 8. Beauty of fensible Objects, what, and how per-
- 9. The Idea of Beauty explained by Painting and Ar-
- 10. Beauty of the moral System, wherein it confists.
- 11. It supposeth a Providence.
- 12. Influence of to xador and to mperov.
- 13. Enthusiasm of Cratylus compared with the Sentiments of Aristotle.
- 14. Compared with the Stoical Principles.
- 15. Minute Philosophers, their Talent for Raillery and Ridicule.
- 16. The Wisdom of those who make Virtue alone its own Reward.

The FOURTH DIALOGUE.

Sect. 1. Prejudices concerning a Deity.

- 2. Rules laid down by Alciphron to be observed in proving a God.
- 3. What Sort of Proof be expects.
- 4. Whence we collect the being of other Thinking In-
- 5. The same Method à fortiori proves the Being of God.
- 6. Alciphron's fecond Thoughts on this Point.
- 7. God Speaks to Men.

.

- 8. How Distance is perceived by Sight.
- 9. The proper Objects of Sight at no Distance.
- 10. Lights, Shades and Colours variously combined form a Language.
- 11. The Signification of this Language learned by Experience.
- 12. God explaineth himself to the Eyes of Men by the arbitrary Use of sensible Signs.

A 4

13. The

13. The Prejudice and two-fold Aspect of a Minute Philosopher.

14. God present to Mankind, informs, admonishes,

and directs them in a sensible Manner.

15. Admirable Nature and Use of this visual Language.

16. Minute Philosophers content to admit a God in

certain Senses.

- 17. Opinion of some who hold that Knowledge and Wisdom are not properly in God.
- 18. Dangerous Tendency of this Notion.

19. Its Original.

20. The Sense of Schoolmen upon it.

21. Scholastic Use of the Terms Analogy and Analogical explained: Analogical Perfections of God misunderstood.

22. God intelligent, wife, and good in the proper Sense of the Words.

23. Objection from Moral Evil considered.

24. Men argue from their own Defects against a Deity.

25. Religious Worship reasonable and expedient.

The FIFTH DIALOGUE.

Sect. 1. Minute Philosophers join in the Cry, and follow the Scent of others.

2. Worship prescribed by the Christian Religion suita-

ble to God and Man.

3. Power and Influence of the Druids.

- 4. Excellency and Usefulness of the Christian Religion.
- 5. It ennobles Mankind and makes them happy.
- 6. Religion neither Biggotry nor Superstition.

7: Physicians and Physic for the Soul.

8. Character of the Clergy.

9. Natural Religion and Human Reason not to be disparaged.

10. Tendency

- 10. Tendency and Use of the Gentile Religion.
- 11. Good Effects of Christianity.
- 12. Englishmen compared with ancient Greeks and Romans.
- 13. The Modern Practice of Duelling.
- 14. Character of the old Romans, how to be formed.
- 15. Genuine Fruits of the Gofpel.
- 16. Wars and Factions not an Effect of the Christian Religion.
- 17. Civil Rage and Massacres in Greece and Rome.
- 18. Virtue of ancient Greeks.
- 19. Quarrels of Polemical Divines.
- 20. Tyranny, Usurpation, Sopbistry of Ecclesiastics.
- 21. The Universities censured.
- 22. Divine Writings of a certain modern Critic.
- 23. Learning the Effect of Religion.
- 24. Barbarism of the Schools.
- 25. Restauration of Learning and polite Arts, to whome owing.
- 26. Prejudice and Ingratitude of Minute Philosophers.
- 27. Their Pretensions and Conduct inconsistent.
- 28. Men and Brutes compared with respect to Religion.
- 30. Free-thinkers mistake their Talents; have a strong Imagination.
- 31. Tithes and Church lands.
- 32. Men distinguished from Human Creatures.
- 33. Distribution of Mankind into Birds, Beasts, and Fishes.
- 34. Plea for Reason allowed, but Unfairness taxed.
- 35. Freedom a Bleffing or a Curfe as it is used.
- 36. Priestcraft not the reigning Evil.

The SIXTH DIALOGUE.

Sect. 1. Points agreed.

2. Sundry Pretences to Revelation.

3. Uncertainty

3. Uncertainty of Tradition.

4. Object and Ground of Faith.

- 5. Some Books disputed, others evidently spurious.
- 6. Stile and Composition of Holy Scripture.

7. Difficulties occurring therein.
8. Obscurity not always a Defect.

9. Inspiration neither impossible nor absurd.

- 10. Objections from the Form and Matter of Divine Revelation, considered.
- 11. Infidelity an Effect of Narrowness and Prejudice.

12. Articles of Christian Faith not unreasonable.

13. Guilt the natural Parent of Fear.

- 14. Things unknown, reduced to the Standard of what Men know.
- 15. Prejudices against the Incarnation of the Son of God.
- 16. Ignorance of the Divine Oeconomy, a Source of Difficulties.
- 17. Wisdom of God, foolishness to Man.

18. Reason, no blind Guide.

19. Ufefulness of Divine Revelation.

20. Prophecies, whence Obscure.

- 21. Eaftern Accounts of Time older than the Mosaic.
- 22. The Humour of Ægyptians, Affyrians, Chaldeans, and other Nations extending their Antiquity beyond Truth, accounted for.

23. Reasons confirming the Mosaic Account.

24. Profane Historians inconsistent.

25. Celfus, Prophyry, and Julian.

26. The Testimony of Josephus considered.

27. Attestation of Jews and Gentiles to Christianity.

28. Forgeries and Herefies.

29. Judgment and Attention of Minute Philosophers.

30. Faith and Miracles.

- 31. Probable Arguments a Sufficient Ground of Faith.
- 32. The Christian Religion able to stand the Test of rational Inquiry.

The

The SEVENTH DIALOGUE.

Sect. 1. Christian Faith impossible.

2. Words Stand for Ideas.

3. No Knowledge or Faith without Ideas.

4. Grace, no Idea of it.

5. Abstract Ideas what and how made.

6. Abstract general Ideas impossible.

7. In what Sense there may be general Ideas.

8. Suggesting Ideas not the only use of Words.

Force as difficult to form an Idea of as Grace.
 Notwithstanding which useful Propositions may be formed concerning it.

11. Belief of the Trinity and other Mysteries not ab-

12. Mistakes about Faith on occasion of profane Raillery.

13. Faith its true Nature and Effects.

14. Illustrated by Science.

15. By Arithmetic in particular.

16. Sciences conversant about Signs.

17. The true End of Speech, Reason, Science and Faith.

18. Metaphysical Objections as strong against Human Sciences as Articles of Faith.

19. No Religion, because no Human Liberty.

20. Farther Proof against Human Liberty.

21. Fatalism a Consequence of erroneous Suppositions.

22. Man an accountable Agent.

23. Inconfiftency, Singularity, and Credulity of Minute Philosophers.

24. Untrodden Paths and new Light of the Minute Philosophers.

25. Sophistry of the Minute Philosophers.

26. Minute Philosophers ambiguous, anigmatical, unfathomable.

27. Scep-

27. Scepticism of the Minute Philosophers.

28. How a Sceptic ought to behave.

29. Minute Philosophers why difficult to convince.

30. Thinking not the epidemical Evil of these times.

31. Infidelity not an Effect of Reason or Thought, its true Motives assigned.

32. Variety of Opinions about Religion, Effects there-

33. Method for proceeding with Minute Philosophers.

34. Want of Thought and want of Education Defects of the present Age.







THE

MINUTE PHILOSOPHER.

The FIRST DIALOGUE.

I. Introduction. II. Aim and Endeavours of Freethinkers. III. Opposed by the Clergy. IV. Liberty of Free-thinking. V. Farther Account of the Views of Free-thinkers. VI. The Progress of a Free-thinker towards Atheism. VII. Joint imposture of the Priest and Magistrate. VIII. The Free-thinker's Method in making Converts and Discoveries. IX. The Atheist alone Free. His Sense of natural Good and Evil. X. Modern Free-thinkers more properly named Minute Philosophers. XI. Minute Philosophers, what fort of Men, and bow educated. XII. Their Numbers, Progress, and Tenets. XIII. Compared with other Philosophers. XIV. What Things and Notions to be esteemed natural. XV. Truth the same, notwithstanding Diversity of Opinions. XVI. Rule and Measure of moral Truths.

I. I Flattered my felf, Theages, that before this time I might have been able to have fent you an agreeable Account of the Success of the Affair, which brought me into this remote corner of the Country. But instead of this, I shou'd now give you the Detail of its Miscarriage,

if I did not rather choose to entertain you with some amusing Incidents, which have helped to make me easy under a Circumstance I cou'd neither obviate nor foresee. Events are not in our power; but it always is, to make a good use even of the very worst. And I must needs own, the Course and Event of this Affair gave opportunity for Reflections, that make me fome amends for a great loss of Time, Pains, and Expence. A Life of Actions which takes its Issue from the Counsels, Passions, and Views of other Men, if it doth not draw a Man to imitate, will at least teach him to observe. And a Mind at liberty to reflect on its own Observations, if it produce nothing useful to the World, seldom fails of Entertainment to it self. For feveral Months past I have enjoy'd such Liberty and Leifure in this distant Retreat, far beyond the Verge of that great Whirlpool of Business, Faction, and Pleasure, which is called the World. And a Retreat in it felf agreeable, after a long Scene of Trouble and Disquiet, was made much more so by the Conversation and good Qualities of my Host Euphranor, who unites in his own Person the Philosopher and the Farmer, two Characters not fo inconfiftent in nature as by Custom they feem to be. Eupbranor, from the time he left the University, had lived in this small Town, where he is possessed of a convenient House with a hundred Acres of Land adjoining to it; which being improved by his own Labour, yield him a plentiful Subfistence. He hath a good Collection, chiefly of old Books, left him by a Clergyman his Uncle, under whose Care he was brought up. And the Business of his Farm doth not hinder him from making good use of it. He hath read much, and thought more; his Health and Strength of Body enabling him the better to bear the Fatigue of Mind. He is of opinion that he cou'd not carry on his Studies with more

Advantage



Advantage in the Closet than the Field, where his Mind is feldom idle while he prunes the Trees, follows the Plough, or looks after his Flocks. In the House of this honest Friend I became acquainted with Crito, a neighbouring Gentleman of diftinguished Merit and Estate, who lives in great Friendship with Euphranor. Last Summer, Crito, whose Parish-Church is in our Town, dining on a Sunday at Euphranor's, I happened to enquire after his Guests, whom we had seen at Church with him the Sunday before. They are both well, faid Crito, but, having once occasionally conformed, to fee what fort of Assembly our Parish cou'd afford. they had no farther Curiofity to gratify at Church. and so chose to stay at home. How, said Euphranor, are they then Dissenters? No, replied Crito, they are Free-thinkers. Eupbranor, who had never met with any of this Species or Sect of Men, and but little of their Writings, shew'd a great Desire to know their Principles or System. That is more, faid Crito, than I will undertake to tell you. Their Writers are of different Opinions. Some go farther, and explain themselves more freely than others. But the current general Notions of the Sect are best learned from Conversation with those who profess themselves of it. Your Curiosity may now be fatisfy'd, if you and Dion wou'd fpend a Week at my House with these Gentlemen, who feem very ready to declare and propagate their Opinions. Alcipbron is above Forty, and no ffranger either to Men or Books. I knew him first at the Temple, which, upon an Estate's falling to him, he quitted, to travel through the polite parts of Europe. Since his Return he hath lived in the Amusements of the Town, which being grown stale and tasteless to his Palate, have flung him into a fort of splenetic Indolence. The young Gentleman, 4

Gentleman, Lysicles, is a near Kinsman of mine. one of lively Parts, and a general Infight into Letters, who, after having passed the Forms of Education, and feen a little of the World, fell into an Intimacy with Men of Pleasure, and Free-thinkers, I am afraid much to the damage of his Constitution and his Fortune. But what I most regret, is the Corruption of his Mind by a Set of pernicious Principles, which, having been observed to survive the Passions of Youth, forestal even the remote Hopes of Amendment. They are both Men of Fashion, and wou'd be agreeable enough, if they did not fancy themselves Free-thinkers. But this, to speak the Truth, has given them a certain Air and Manner, which a little too visibly declare they think themfelves wifer than the rest of the World. I shou'd therefore be not at all displeased if my Guests met with their Match, where they least expected it, in a Country Farmer. I shall not, replied Euphranor, pretend to any more than barely to inform my felf of their Principles and Opinions. For this end I propose to-morrow to set a Week's Task to my Labourers, and accept your Invitation, if Dion thinks good. To which I gave confent. Mean while, faid Crito, I shall prepare my Guests, and let them know that an honest Neighbour hath a mind to difcourse them on the Subject of their Free-thinking. And, if I am not much mistaken, they will please themselves with the Prospect of leaving a Convert behind them, even in a country Village. Next Morning Euphranor rose early, and spent the Forenoon in ordering his Affairs. After Dinner we took our Walk to Crito's, which lay through half a dozen pleasant Fields planted round with Plane-trees, that are very common in this part of the Country. We walked under the delicious Shade of these Trees for about an Hour before wecame to Crito's House, which stands in the middle of a small Park, beauti-

fy'd with two fine Groves of Oak and Walnut, and a winding Stream of fweet and clear Water. We met a Servant at the Door with a small Basket of Fruit which he was carrying into a Grove, where he faid his Master was with the two Strangers, we found them all three fitting under a Shade. And after the usual Forms at first meeting, Euphranor and I fat down by them. Our Conversation began upon the Beauty of this rural Scene, the fine Season of the Year, and some late Improvements which had been made in the adjacent Country by new Methods of Agriculture. Whence Alcipbron took occasion to observe, That the most valuable Improvements came lateft. I should have small Temptation, said he, to live where Men have neither polished Manners, nor improved Minds, though the Face of the Country were ever fo well improved. But I have long observed, that there is a gradual Progress in humane Affairs. The first Care of Mankind is to supply the Cravings of Nature; in the next place they study the Conveniencies and Comforts of Life. But the fubduing Prejudices, and acquiring true Knowledge, that Herculean Labour is the last, being what demands the most perfect Abilities, and to which all other Advantages are preparative. Right, faid Eupbranor, Alcipbron hath touched our true Defect. It was always my Opinion, That as foon as we had provided Subfiftence for the Body, our next Care should be to improve the Mind. But the Desire of Wealth steps between and engrosseth Mens Thoughts.

II. ALC. Thought is that which we are told distinguisheth Man from Beast; and Freedom of Thought makes as great a difference between Man and Man. It is to the noble Asserters of this Privilege and Perfection of humane Kind, the Free-thinkers I mean, who have sprung up and multiplied of late

B Years,

Years, that we are indebted for all those important Discoveries, that Ocean of Light which hath broke in and made its way, in spight of Slavery and Superstition. Euphranor, who is a fincere Enemy to both, testified a great Esteem for those Worthies who had preferved their Country from being ruined by them, having spread so much Light and Knowledge over the Land. He added, That he liked the Name and Character of a Free-thinker: but in his Sense of the Word, every honest Inquirer after Truth in any Age or Country was intitled to it. He therefore defired to know what this Sect was that Alcipbron had spoken of as newly forung up; what were their Tenets; what were their Discoveries; and wherein they employ'd themselves, for the benefit of Mankind? Of all which, he shou'd think himself obliged, if Alcipbron wou'd inform him. That I shall very easily, replied Alcipbron, for I profess my self one of the number, and my most intimate Friends are some of the most considerable among them. And perceiving that Euphranor heard him with respect, he proceeded very fluently. You must know, faid he, that the mind of Man may be fitly compared to a piece of Land. What stubbing, plowing, digging and harrowing is to the one, that thinking, reflecting, examining is to the other. Each hath its proper culture; and as Land that is suffered to lie waste and wild for a long tract of time will be overspread with brush-wood, brambles, thorns and fuch vegetables which have neither use nor beauty; even fo there will not fail to sprout up in a neglected uncultivated mind, a great number of prejudices and abfurd opinions, which owe their origin partly to the Soil it felf, the passions and imperfections of the mind of Man, and partly to those Seeds which chance to be scattered in it by every wind of Doctrine,

ges.

Doctrine, which the cunning of Statesmen, the singularity of Pedants, the superstition of Fools or the imposture of Priests shall raise. Represent to your felf the mind of Man or human Nature in general, that for fo many ages had lain obnoxious to the frauds of defigning and the follies of weak Men. How it must be over-run with prejudices and errors, what firm and deep Roots they must have taken, and confequently how difficult a task it must be to extirpate them? And yet this work no less difficult than glorious is the employment of the modern Free-thinkers. Alcipbron having faid this made a pause, and looked round on the Company. Truly, faid I, a very laudable undertaking! We think, faid Euphranor, that it is praise-worthy to clear and fubdue the earth, to tame brute Animals. to fashion the outsides of Men, provide sustenance for their Bodies, and cure their Maladies. But what is all this in comparison of that most excellent and useful undertaking to free Mankind from their errors, and to improve and adorn their minds? For things of less merit towards the world, Altars have been raised and Temples built in antient times. Too many in our days, replied Alcipbron, are fuch Fools as not to know their best Benefactors from their worst Enemies. They have a blind respect for those who enslave them, and look upon their Deliverers as a dangerous fort of Men that wou'd undermine received Principles and Opinions. EUPH. It were a great pity such worthy ingenious Men shou'd meet with any discouragement. For my part I shou'd think, a Man who spent his time in fuch a painful and impartial fearch after Truth a better friend to Mankind than the greatest Statesmen or Hero, the advantage of whose Labours is confined to a little part of the world, and a short space of time, whereas a Ray of Truth may enlighten the whole world and extend to future a-B 2

ges. ALC. It will be some time I fear before the common herd think as you do. But the better sort, the Men of parts and polite Education pay a due

regard to the Patrons of Light and Truth.

III. EUPH. The Clergy no doubt are on all occasions ready to forward and applaud your worthy endeavours. Upon hearing this Lysicles cou'd hardly refrain from laughing. And Alcipbron with an air of pity told Euphranor that he perceived he was unacquainted with the real character of those Men. For, faith he, you must know that of all Men living they are our greatest Enemies. If it were posfible they wou'd extinguish the very light of nature, turn the world into a dungeon, and keep mankind for ever in Chains and darkness. EUPH. I never imagined any thing like this of our Protestant Clergy, particularly those of the established Church, whom, if I may be allowed to judge by what I have feen of them and their writings, I shou'd have thought lovers of learning and useful knowledge. ALC. Take my word for it, Priests of all religions are the fame, wherever there is Priestcraft there will be a persecuting Spirit, which they never fail to exert to the utmost of their power against all those who have the courage to think for themselves, and will not submit to be hoodwinked and manacled by their Reverend Leaders. Those great Masters of Pedantry and Jargon have coined feveral Systems, which are all equally true and of equal importance to the world. The contending Sects are each alike fond of their own, and alike prone to discharge their fury upon all who diffent from them. Cruelty and Ambition being the darling vices of Priests and Churchmen all the world over, they endeavour in all Countries to get an ascendant over the rest of mankind, and the Magistrate having a joint interest with the Priest in fubduing,

fubduing, amusing, and scaring the People, too often lends a hand to the Hierarchy, who never think their authority and possessions secure, so long as those who differ from them in opinion are allowed to partake even in the common rights belonging to their birth or species. To represent the matter in a true light, figure to your felves a monster or spectre made up of Superstition and Enthusiasm, the joint issue of Statecrast and Priestcrast, ratling chains in one hand and with the other brandishing a flaming Sword over the Land, and menacing destruction to all who shall dare to follow the dictates of Reason and common Sense. Do but confider this, and then fay if there was not danger as well as difficulty in our undertaking. Yet, fuch is the generous ardour that Truth inspires, our Freethinkers are neither overcome by the one nor daunted by the other. In spight of both we have already made fo many Profelytes among the better fort, and their numbers increase so fast, that we hope we shall be able to carry all before us, beat down the Bulwarks of all Tyranny, Secular. or Ecclefiastical, break the Fetters and Chains of our Countrymen, and restore the original inherent Rights, Liberties, and Prerogatives of Mankind. Euphranor heard this discourse with his mouth open and his eyes fixed upon Alcipbron, who, having uttered it with no small emotion, stopt to draw breath and recover himself; But finding that no body made answer he resumed the thread of his discourse, and turning to Euphranor spoke in a lower note what follows. The more innocent and honest a Man is, the more liable is he to be imposed on by the specious pretences of other Men. You have probably met with certain writings of our Divines that treat of grace, virtue, goodness and fuch matters fit to amuse and deceive a simple honest mind. But believe me when I tell you they B 3

are all at bottom (however they may gild their defigns) united by one common principle in the same Interest. I will not deny there may be here and there a poor half-witted Man that means no mischief; but this I will be bold to say that all the Men of Sense among them are true at bottom to these three pursuits of ambition, avarice and re-

venge.

IV. While Alciphron was speaking, a Servant came to tell him and Lysicles, that some Men who were going to London waited to receive their orders. Whereupon they both rose up and went towards the house. They were no sooner gone, but Euphranor addressing himself to Crito said, he believed that poor Gentleman had been a great fufferer for his Free-thinking, for that he feemed to express himself with the passion and Resentment natural to Men who have received very bad usage. I believe no fuch thing, answered Crito, but have often obferved those of his Sect run into two faults of conversation, declaiming and bantering, just as the tragic or the comic humour prevails. Sometimes they work themselves into high passions and are frightened at Spectres of their own raising. In those fits every Country Curate passes for an Inquisitor. At other times they affect a fly facetious manner, making use of hints and allusions, expressing little, infinuating much, and upon the whole feeming to divert themselves with the Subject and their Adver-But if you wou'd know their opinions you must make them speak out and keep close to the point. Persecution for Free-thinking is a topic they are apt to enlarge on though without any just cause, every one being at full liberty to think what he pleases, there being no such thing in England that I know as Persecution for opinion, sentiment, or thought. But in every Country, I suppose, fome care is taken to restrain petulant Speech, and whatever Mens inward thoughts may be, to difcourage an outward contempt of what the public esteemeth Sacred. Whether this care in England hath of late been fo excessive, as to distress the Subjects of this once free and eafy Government. whether the Free-thinkers can truly complain of any hardship upon the score of conscience or opinion, you will better be able to judge, when you hear from themselves an account of the numbers. progress and notions of their Sect: which I doubt not they will communicate fully and freely, provided no body present seem shocked or offended. For in that case it is possible good manners may put them upon fome referve. Oh! faid Euphranor. I am never angry with any Man for his opinion whether he be Few, Turk or Idolater, he may speak his mind freely to me without fear of offending. I shou'd even be glad to hear what he hath to fav. provided he faith it in an ingenuous candid manner. Whoever digs in the Mine of Truth I look on as my Fellow-labourer, but if, while I am taking true pains, he diverts himself with teizing me and flinging Dust in mine Eyes, I shall soon be tired of him.

V. In the mean time Alcipbron and Lysicles having dispatched what they went about returned to us. Lysicles sate down where he had been before. But Alcipbron stood over-against us, with his arms folded across, and his head reclined on the left shoulder in the posture of a Man meditating. We sate silent not to disturb his thoughts; and after two or three Minutes he uttered these words, oh Truth! oh Liberty! after which he remained mussing as before. Upon this Euphranor took the freedom to interrupt him. Alcipbron, said he, it is not fair to spend your time in Soliloquies. The conversation of learned and knowing Men is rarely to

be met with in this corner, and the opportunity you have put into my Hands I value too much, not to make the best use of it. ALC. Are you then in earnest a Votary of Truth, and is it possible you shou'd bear the liberty of a fair Inquiry? EUPH. It is what I defire of all things. ALC. What! upon every Subject? upon the notions you first fucked in with your Milk, and which have been ever fince nurfed by parents, pastors, tutors, religious assemblies, books of Devotion and such methods of pre-possessing Mens minds. EUPH. I love information upon all Subjects that come in my way, and especially upon those that are most important. ALC. If then you are in earnest hold fair and stand firm, while I probe your prejudices and extirpate your principles.

Dum veteres avias tibi de pulmone revello.

Having faid thus, Alcipbron knit his brows and made a fhort pause, after which he proceeded in the following manner. If we are at the pains to dive and penetrate into the bottom of things, and analyse Opinions into their first principles, we shall find that those Opinions which are thought of greatest consequence have the slightest original. being derived either from the casual customs of the Country where we live, or from early instruction instilled into our tender minds, before we are able to discern between right and wrong, true and false. The Vulgar (by whom I understand all those who do not make a free use of their Reason) are apt to take these prejudices for things facred and unquestionable, believing them to be imprinted on the hearts of men by God himself, or convey'd by Revelation from Heaven, or to carry with them fo great light and evidence as must force an affent without any inquiry or examination. Thus the shallow Vulgar have their heads furnished with fundry conceits, principles and doctrines, religious, moral

moral and political, all which they maintain with a zeal proportionable to their want of Reason. On the other hand, those who duly employ their faculties in the fearch of Truth, take especial care to weed out of their minds and extirpate all fuch notions or prejudices as were planted in them before they arrived at the free and intire use of Reason. This difficult task hath been fuccessfully performed by our modern Free-thinkers, who have not only diffected with great Sagacity the received Systems, and traced every established prejudice to the fountain-head, the true and genuine motives of affent: But also, having been able to embrace in one comprehensive view the several parts and ages of the World, they observed a wonderful variety of Customs and Rites, of Institutions Religious and Civil, of Notions and Opinions very unlike and even contrary one to another: A certain fign they cannot all be true. And yet they are all maintained by their feveral Partifans with the same positive air and warm zeal, and if examined will be found to bottom on one and the fame Foundation, the strength of prejudice. By the help of these Remarks and Discoveries, they have broke through the bands of popular Custom, and having freed themselves from Imposture do now generously lend a hand to their Fellow Subjects, to lead them into the same paths of Light and Liberty. Thus, Gentlemen, I have given you a summary account of the views and endeavours of those Men who are called Free-thinkers. If in the course of what I have faid or shall fay hereafter, there be some things contrary to your pre-conceived Opinions, and therefore shocking and disagreeable, you will pardon the freedom and plainness of a Philosopher. and confider that, whatever displeasure I give you of that kind, I do it in strict regard to Truth and Obedience to your own commands. I am very fensible. fensible, that Eyes long kept in the dark cannot bear a fudden view of noon day light, but must be brought to it by degrees. It is for this Reason, the ingenious Gentlemen of our Profession are accustomed to proceed gradually, beginning with those prejudices to which Men have the least Attachment, and thence proceeding to undermine the rest by flow and infensible degrees, till they have demolished the whole Fabric of Human Folly and Superstition. But the little time I can propose to fpend here obligeth me to take a shorter course. and be more direct and plain than possibly may be thought to fuit with Prudence and good Manners. Upon this, we affured him he was at full liberty to speak his mind of Things, Persons and Opinions without the least reserve. It is a liberty, replied Alcipbron, that we Free-thinkers are equally willing to give and take. We love to call things by their right Names, and cannot endure that Truth shou'd fuffer through Complaifance. Let us therefore lay it down for a Preliminary, that no offence be taken at any thing whatfoever shall be faid on To which we all agreed. either fide.

VI. In order then, said Alcipbron, to find out the Truth, we will suppose that I am bred up, for instance in the Church of England. When I come to maturity of Judgment and reflect on the particular Worship and Opinions of this Church, I do not remember when or by what means they first took possession of my mind, but there I find them from time immemorial. Then casting an Eye on the Education of Children, from whence I can make a judgment of my own, I observe they are instructed in religious matters before they can reason about them, and consequently that all such instruction is nothing else but filling the tender mind of a Child with prejudices. I do therefore reject all those religious notions, which I consider as the

other Follies of my Childhood. I am confirmed in this way of thinking, when I look abroad into the World, where I observe Papists and several Sects of Diffenters which do all agree in a general profession of Belief in Christ, but differ vastly one from another in the particulars of Faith and Wor-I then enlarge my View fo as to take in Yews and Mahometans, between who and the Chriftians I perceive indeed fome fmall agreement in the Belief of one God; but then they have each their diffinct Laws and Revelations, for which they express the same regard. But extending my view still further to Heathenish and Idolatrous Nations I discover an endless variety, not only in particular Opinions and Modes of Worship, but even in the very notion of a Deity, wherein they widely differ one from another, and from all the forementioned Sects. Upon the whole, instead of Truth fimple and uniform I perceive nothing but Discord, Opposition and wild Pretensions, all springing from the same source to wit the prejudice of Education. From fuch reasonings and reflections as thefe, thinking Men have concluded that all Religions are alike false and fabulous. One is a Christian, another a Jew, a third a Mahometan. a fourth an idolatrous Gentile, but all from one and the same reason, because they happen to be bred up each in his respective Sect. In the same manner therefore, as each of these contending Parties condemns the rest, so an unprejudiced standerby will condemn and reject them all together, obferving that they all draw their origin from the fame fallacious Principle, and are carried on by the same Artifice to answer the same ends of the Priest and the Magistrate.

VII. EUPH. You hold then that the Magifirate concurs with the Priest in imposing on the People. ALC. Ido, and so must every one who

considers things in a true light. For you must know, the Magistrates principal aim is to keep the People under him in awe. Now the public Eye restrains Men from open Offences against the Laws and Government. But to prevent fecret Transgressions a Magistrate finds it expedient, that Men shou'd believe there is an Eye of Providence watching over their private Actions and Defigns. And to intimidate those who might otherwise be drawn into Crimes by the prospect of Pleasure and Profit, he gives them to understand, that whoever escapes Punishment in this Life will be fure to find it in the next, and that so heavy and lasting as infinitely to over balance the Pleasure and Profit accruing from his Crimes. Hence the Belief of a God, the Immortality of the Soul, and a future state of Rewards and Punishments have been esteemed useful Engines of Government. And to the end that these notional airy Doctrines might make a fenfible impression, and be retained on the minds of Men, skilful Rulers have in the feveral civilized Nations of the Earth devised Temples, Sacrifices, Churches, Rites, Ceremonies, Habits, Music, Prayer, Preaching, and the like spiritual trumpery, whereby the Priest maketh temporal gains, and the Magistrate findeth his account in frightening and fubduing the People. This is the original of the Combination between Church and State, of Religion by Law established, of rights, immunities and incomes of Priests all over the World: There being no Government but wou'd have you fear God that you may honour the King or civil Power. And you will ever observe that politic Princes keep up a good undestanding with their Clergy, to the end that they in return, by inculcating Religion and Loyalty into the minds of the People, may render them tame, timorous and flavish. Crito and I heard this Discourse of Alciphron

phron with the utmost attention, though without any appearance of surprize, there being nothing in it to us new or unexpected. But Euphranor, who had never before been present at such Conversation, cou'd not help shewing some Astonishment, which Lysicles observing, asked him with a lively Air, how he liked Alcipbron's Lecture. It is, faid he, the first I believe that you ever heard of the kind, and requireth a strong Stomach to digest it. EUPH. I will own to you that my Digestion is none of the quickest; but it hath sometimes, by degrees, been able to master things which at first appeared indigestible. At present I admire the free Spirit and Eloquence of Alcipbron, but, to speak the Truth, I am rather aftonished, than convinced of the Truth of his Opinions. How (faid he turning to Alciphron) is it then possible you shou'd not believe the Being of a God? ALC. To be plain with you, I do not.

VIII. But this is what I forefaw, a Flood of Light let in at once upon the Mind being apt to dazzle and disorder, rather than enlighten it. Was I not pinched in Time, the regular way would be to have begun with the Circumstantials of Religion, next to have attacked the Mysteries of Christianity, after that proceeded to the practical Doctrines. and in the last place to have extirpated that which of all other religious Prejudices, being the first taught, and Basis of the rest, hath taken the deepest root in our Minds, I mean the Belief of a God. I do not wonder it flicks with you, having known feveral very ingenious Men who found it difficult to free themselves from this Prejudice. EUPH. All Men have not the fame Alacrity and Vigour in thinking: for my own part, I find it a hard matter to keep pace with you. ALC. To help you, I will go a little way back, and resume the Thread of my Reasoning. First I must acquaint you, That having

having applied my Mind to contemplate the Idea of Truth, I discovered it to be of a stable, permanent, and uniform nature; not various and changeable, like Modes or Fashions, and things depending on Fancy. In the next place, having observed several Sects and Subdivisions of Sects espousing very different and contrary Opinions, and vet all professing Christianity, I rejected those Points wherein they differed, retaining only that which was agreed to by all, and so became 2. Latitudinarian. Having afterwards, upon a more enlarged View of things, perceived that Christians, Tews, and Mahometans had each their different Systems of Faith, agreeing only in the Belief of one God, I became a Deift. Lastly, extending my View to all the other various Nations which inhabit this Globe, and finding they agreed in no one Point of Faith, but differed one from another, as well as from the forementioned Sects, even in the Notion of a God, in which there is as great Diversity as in the Methods of Worship, I thereupon became an Atheist: it being my Opinion that a Man of Courage and Sense shou'd follow his Argument wherever it leads him, and that nothing is more ridiculous than to be a Free-thinker by halves. I approve the Man who makes thorough Work, and not content with lopping off the Branches, extirpates the very Root from which they forung.

IX. Atheism therefore, that Bugbear of Women and Fools, is the very Top and Perfection of Freethinking. It is the grand Arcanum to which a true Genius naturally rifeth, by a certain Climax or Gradation of Thought, and without which he can never possess his Soul in absolute Liberty and Repose. For your thorough Conviction in this main Article, do but examine the Notion of a God with the same Freedom that you would other Prejudices.

Trace

Trace it to the fountain-head, and you shall not find that you had it by any of your Senses, the only true means of discovering what is real and substantial in Nature: You will find it lying amongst other old Lumber in some obscure corner of the Imagination, the proper Receptacle of Visions, Fancies, and Prejudices of all kinds; and if you are more attached to this than the rest, it is only because it is the oldest. This is all, take my Word for it, and not mine only, but that of many more the most ingenious Men of the Age, who, I can affure you, think as I do on the Subject of a Deity. Though fome of them hold it proper, to proceed with more Reserve in declaring to the World their Opinion in this Particular, than in most others. And it must be owned, there are still too many in England who retain a foolish Prejudice against the Name of Atheist. But it lessens every Day among the better fort: and when it is quite worn out, our Free-thinkers may then, (and not till then) be faid to have given the finishing Stroke to Religion; it being evident that so long as the Existence of God is believed, Religion must subsist in some Shape or other. But the Root being once plucked up, the Scions which shot from it will of course wither and decay. Such are all those whimsical Notions of Conscience, Duty, Principle, and the like, which fills a Man's Head with Scruples, awe him with Fears, and make him a more thorough Slave than the Horse he rides. A Man had better a thousand times be hunted by Bailiffs or Messengers than haunted by these Spectres, which embarass and embitter all his Pleasures, creating the most real and fore Servitude upon Earth. But the Free-thinker, with a vigorous flight of Thought breaks through those airy Springes, and afferts his original Independency. Others indeed may talk and write, and fight about Liberty, and make an outward

outward Pretence to it, but the Free-thinker alone is truly free. Alcipbron having ended this Difcourse with an Air of Triumph, Euphranor spoke to him in the following Manner. You make clear Work. The Gentlemen of your Profession are, it feems, admirable Weeders. You have rooted up a world of Notions, I shou'd be glad to see what fine things you have planted in their stead. ALC. Have Patience, good Eupbranor. I will shew you in the first place, That whatever was found and good we leave untouched, and encourage it to grow in the Mind of Man. And fecondly, I will shew you what excellent things we have planted in it. You must know then, that pursuing our close and fevere Scrutiny, we do at last arrive at something folid and real, in which all Mankind agree, to wit. the Appetites, Passions, and Senses: These are founded in Nature, are real, have real Objects, and are attended with real and substantial Pleafures; Food, Drink, Sleep, and the like animal Enjoyments being what all Men like and love. And if we extend our view to the other kinds of Animals, we shall find them all agree in this, that they have certain natural Appetites and Senfes, in the gratifying and fatisfying of which they are constantly employ'd. Now these real natural good things which include nothing of Notion or Fancy, we are fo far from destroying, that we do all we can to cherish and improve them. According to us, every wife Man looks upon himself, or his own bodily Existence in this present World, as the Center and ultimate End of all his Actions and Regards. He confiders his Appetites as natural Guides directing to his proper Good, his Passions and Senfes as the natural true Means of enjoying this Good. Hence he endeavours to keep his Appetites in high Relish, his Passions and Senses strong and lively, and to provide the greatest Quantity and Variety of real Objects suited to them, which he studieth to enjoy by all possible means, and in the highest Perfection imaginable. And the Man who can do this without Restraint, Remorfe, or Fear, is as happy as any other Animal whatfoever, or as his Nature is capable of being. Thus I have given you a fuccinct View of the Principles, Discoveries. and Tenets of the felect Spirits of this enlightened Age.

X. Crito remarked, that Alcipbron had spoke his Mind with great Clearness. Yes, replied Eupbranor, we are obliged to the Gentleman for letting us at once into the Tenets of his Sect. But, if I may be allowed to speak my Mind, Alcipbron, though in compliance with my own Request, hath given me no small Uneasiness. You need, said Alcipbron, make no Apology for speaking freely what you think to one who professeth himself a Free-thinker. I shou'd be forry to make one, whom I meant to oblige, uneafy. Pray let me know wherein I have offended. I am half ashamed, replied Euphranor, to own that I who am no great Genius have a Weakness incidental to little ones. I wou'd fay that I have favourite Opinions, which you represent to be Errors and Prejudices. For Instance, the Immortality of the Soul is a Notion I am fond of, as what supports the Mind with a very pleasing Prospect. And if it be an Error, I shou'd perhaps be of Tully's Mind, who in that Case professed he shou'd be forry to know the Truth, acknowledging no fort of Obligation to certain Philosophers in his Days, who taught the Soul of Man was mortal. They were, it feems, Predecessors to those who are now called Free-think-

ers; which Name being too general and indefinite, inasmuch as it comprehends all those who think for themselves, whether they agree in Opinion with

to assign them a specific Appellation or peculiar Name, whereby to distinguish them from other Philosophers, at least in our present Conference. For I cannot bear to argue against Free-thinking and Free-thinkers. ALC. In the Eyes of a wife Man Words are of fmall moment. We do not think Truth attached to a Name. EUPH. If you please then, to avoid Confusion, let us call your Sed by the same Name that Tully (who understood the force of Language) bestow'd upon them. ALC. With all my heart. Pray what may that Name be? EUPH. Why, he calls them Minute Philesothers. Right, faid Crito, the modern Freethinkers are the very fame with those Cicero called Minute Philosophers, which Name admirably suits them, they being a fort of Sect which diminish all the most valuable things, the thoughts, views, and hopes of Men; all the Knowledge, Notions, and Theories of the Mind they reduce to Sense; Humane Nature they contract and degrade to the narrow low Standard of Animal Life, and affign us only a small pittance of Time instead of Immortality. Alcipbron very gravely remark'd, That the Gentlemen of his Sect had done no injury to Man. and that if he be a little, short-lived, contemptible Animal, it was not their faying it made him fo: And they were no more to blame for whatever defects they discover, than a faithful Glass for making the wrinkles which it only shews. As to what you observe, said he, of those we now call Free-thinkers having been anciently termed Minute Philosophers, it is my opinion this Appellation might be derived from their confidering things minutely, and not swallowing them in the gross, as other Men are used to do. Besides, we all know the best Eyes are necessary to discern the minutest Objects: It feems therefore, that Minute Philosophers might

have been so called from their distinguished perspicacity. EUPH. O Alcipbron! these Minute Philosophers (since that is their true Name) are a fort of Pirates who plunder all that come in their way. I consider myself as a Man lest stript and desolate on a black Beach.

XI. But who are these profound and learned Men that of late Years have demolished the whole Fabric which Law-givers, Philosophers and Divines had been erecting for so many Ages? Lysicles hearing these words, smiled, and said he believed Euphraner had figured to himself Philosophers in fourre caps and long gowns: but, thanks to thefe happy Times, the Reign of Pedantry was over. Our Philosophers said he, are of a very different kind from those aukward Students, who think to come at Knowledge by poring on dead Languages. and old Authors, or by fequestring themselves from the Cares of the World to meditate in Solitude and Retirement. They are the best bred Men of the Age, Men who know the World, Men of pleafure, Men of fashion, and fine Gentlemen. EUPH. I have fome small notion of the People you mention, but shou'd never have taken them for Philosophers. CRI. Nor wou'd any one else till of late. The World it feems was long under a mistake about the way to Knowledge, thinking it lay through a tedious course of Academical Education and Study. But among the Discoveries of the present Age, one of the principal is the finding out that fuch a Method doth rather retard and obstruct, than promote Knowledge. ALC. Academical Study may be comprised in two points. Reading and Meditation. Their Reading is chiefly employ'd on ancient Authors in dead Languages: fo that a great part of their Time is spent in learning Words; which, when they have mastered with infinite pains, what do they get by it but but old and obfolete Notions, that are now quite exploded and out of use? Then, as to their Meditations, what can they possibly be good for? He that wants the proper Materials of Thought, may think and meditate for ever to no purpose: Those Cobwebs foun by Scholars out of their own Brains being alike unferviceable, either for Use or Ornament. Proper Ideas or Materials are only to be got by frequenting good Company. I know feveral Gentlemen, who, fince their Appearance in the World, have spent as much time in rubbing off the ruft and pedantry of a College Education. as they had done before in acquiring it. LYS. I'll undertake, a Lad of fourteen, bred in the modern way, shall make a better Figure, and be more confidered in any Drawing-Room or Affembly of polite People, than one of four and twenty, who hath lain by a long time at School and College. He shall say better things, in a better manner, and be more liked by good Judges. EUPH. Where doth he pick up all this Improvement? CRI. Where our grave Ancestors wou'd never have look'd for it, in a Drawing-Room, a Coffee-House, a Chocolate-House, at the Tavern, or Groom-Porter's. In these and the like fashionable Places of Refort, it is the Custom for polite Persons to fpeak freely on all Subjects, religious, moral, or political. So that a young Gentleman who frequents them is in the way of hearing many inftructive Lectures, feafoned with Wit and Raillery, and uttered with Spirit. Three or four Sentences from a Man of quality spoke with a good Air, make more Impression, and convey more Knowledge, than a dozen Differtations in a dry Academical EUPH. There is then no Method or Course of Studies in those Places. LYS. None but an eafy free Conversation, which takes in every thing thing that offers, without any Rule or Defign. EUPH. I always thought that some Order was necessary to attain any useful degree of Knowledge, that Haste and Confusion begat a conceited Ignorance, that to make our Advances fure, they shou'd be gradual, and those Points first learned which might cast a light on what was to follow. ALC. So long as Learning was to be obtained only by that flow formal course of Study, few of the better fort knew much of it; but now it is grown an Amusement, our young Gentry and Nobility imbibe it infensibly amidst their Diversions, and make a confiderable Progress. EUPH. Hence probably the great number of Minute Philosophers. CRI. It is to this that Sect is owing for so many ingenious Proficients of both Sexes. You may now commonly see (what no former Age ever saw) a young Lady or a Petit Maitre nonplus a Divine or an old-fashioned Gentleman, who hath read many a Greek and Latin Author, and spent much Time in hard methodical Study. EUPH. It shou'd feem then that Method, Exactness, and Industry are a Disadvantage. Here Alciphron, turning to Lysicles, faid he cou'd make the point very clear, if Euphranor had any notion of Painting. EUPH. I never faw a first-rate Picture in my Life, but have a tolerable Collection of Prints, and have feen fome good Drawings. ALC. You know then the difference between the Dutch and the Italian manner. EUPH. I have some notion of it. ALC. Suppose now a Drawing finished by the nice and laborious Touches of a Dutch Pencil, and another off-hand scratched out in the free manner of a great Italian Master. The Dutch Piece, which hath cost so much pains and time will be exact indeed, but without that Force, Spirit, or Grace, which appear in the other, and are the Effects of

an easy free Pencil. Do but apply this, and the Point will be clear. EUPH. Pray inform me, did those great Italian Masters begin and proceed in their Art without any choice of Method or Subiect, and always draw with the fame eafe and freedom? Or did they observe some Method, beginning with simple and elementary parts, an Eye, a Nose, a Finger, which they drew with great pains and care, often drawing the fame thing, in order to draw it correctly, and fo proceeding with Patience and Industry, till after a considerable length of Time they arrived at the free masterly manner you speak of. If this were the Case, I leave you to make the Application. ALC. You may difpute the Matter if you please. But a Man of parts is one thing, and a Pedant another. Pains and Method may do for fome fort of People. must be a long time kindling wet Straw into a vile fmothering Flame, but Spirits blaze out at once. EUPH. The Minute Philosophers have, it feems, better Parts than other Men, which qualifies them for a different Education. ALC. Tell me, Euphranor, what is it that gives one Man a better Mein than another; more Politeness in Dress, Speech, and Motion? Nothing but frequenting good Company. By the fame means Men get infenfibly a delicate Tafte, a refined Judgment, a certain Politeness in thinking and expressing one's felf. No wonder if you Countrymen are strangers to the Advantage of polite Conversation, which constantly keeps the Mind awake and active, exercifing its Faculties, and calling forth all his Strength and Spirit on a thousand different Occafions and Subjects, that never came in the way of a Book-worm in a College, no more than of a Ploughman. CRI. Hence those lively Faculties. that quickness of Aprehension, that slyness of Ridicule, that egregious Talent of Wit and Humour which

which diftinguish the Gentlemen of your Profession. EUPH. It shou'd seem then that your Sect is made up of what you call fine Gentlemen. LYS. Not altogether, for we have among us some contemplative Spirits of a coarfer Education, who, from observing the Behaviour and Proceedings cf Apprentices, Watermen, Porters, and the Assemblies of Rabble in the Streets, have arrived at a profound Knowledge of Humane Nature, made great Discoveries about the Principles, Springs, and Motives of moral Actions. These have demolished the received Systems, and done a world of good in the City. ALC. I tell you we have Men of all Sorts and Professions, plodding Citizens, thriving Stockjobbers, skilful Men in Bufiness, polite Courtiers, gallant Men of the Army; but our chief Strength and Flower of the Flock are those promising young Men who have the Advantage of a modern Education. These are the growing Hopes of our Sect, by whose Credit and Influence in a few Years we expect to see those great things accomplished that we have in view. EUPH. I cou'd never have imagined your Sect fo considerable. ALC. There are in England many honest Folk as much in the dark about these matters as your felf.

XII. To judge of the prevailing Opinion among People of fashion, by what a Senator saith in the House, a Judge upon the Bench, or a Priest in the Pulpit, who all speak according to Law, that is, to the reverend prejudices of our Fore-sathers, wou'd be wrong. You should go into good Company, and mind what Men of parts and breeding say, those who are best heard and most admired as well in public places of resort, as in private visits. He only who hath these opportunities, can know our real strength, our numbers and the figure that we make. EUPH. By your account there must

be many Minute Philosophers among the Men of Rank and Fortune. ALC. Take my word for it, not a few, and they do much contribute to the fpreading our notions. For he who knows the World must observe, that fashions constantly de-It is therefore the right way to propagate an Opinion from the upper end. Not to fay that the Patronage of fuch Men is an encouragement to our Authors. EUPH. It feems then you have Authors among you. LYS. That we have feveral, and those very great Men who have obliged the World with many useful and profound discoveries. CRI. Moschon for instance hath proved that Man and Beast are really of the same nature: That confequently a Man need only indulge his Senfes and Appetites to be as happy as a Brute. Gorgias hath gone further, demonstrating Man to be a piece of Clock-work or Machine: and that Thought or Reason are the same thing as the impulse of one Ball against another. Cimon hath made noble use of these discoveries, proving as clearly as any proposition in Mathematics, that conscience is a whim and morality a prejudice: and that a Man is no more accountable for his actions than a Clock is for striking. Tryphon hath written irrefragably on the usefulness of vice. Thrasenor hath consuted the foolish prejudice Men had against Atheism. shewing that a republick of Atheists might live very happily together. Demylus hath made a jest of Loyalty, and convinced the World there is nothing in it: To him and another Philosopher of the same stamp this age is indebted for discovering, that public Spirit is an idle Enthusiasm which seizeth only on weak minds. It wou'd be endless to recount the Discoveries made by writers of this Sect. LYS. But the Master-piece and finishing Stroke is a learned Anecdote of our great Diagoras, containing a demonstration against the Being of God; which which it is convinced the public is not yet ripe for. But I am affured by fome judicious Friends who have feen it, that it is as clear as Day-light, and will do a world of good, at one blow demolishing the whole System of Religion. These discoveries are published by our Philosophers, sometimes in just Volumes, but often in Pamphlets and loose Papers for their readier conveyance through the Kingdom. And to them must be ascribed that abfolute and independent freedom, which groweth fo fast to the terrour of all Bigots. Even the dull and ignorant begin to open their Eyes, and be influenced by the example and authority of fo many ingenious Men. EUPH. It shou'd seem by this account that your Sect extend their discoveries beyond Religion; and that Loyalty to his Prince or Reverence for the Laws are but mean things in the Eye of a Minute Philosopher. LYS. Very mean, we are too wife to think there is any thing Sacred either in King or Constitution, or indeed in any thing elfe. A Man of Sense may perhaps feem to pay an occasional regard to his Prince, but this is no more at bottom than what he pays to God when he kneels at the Sacrament to qualify himself for an Office. Fear God, and honour the King, are a pair of flavish maxims, which had for a long time crampt Human Nature, and awed not only weak minds but even Men of good Understanding, till their Eyes, as I observed before, were opened by our Philosophers. EUPH. Methinks I can eafily comprehend that, when the fear of God is quite extinguished, the mind must be very eafy with respect to other Duties, which become outward pretences and formalities, from the moment that they quit their hold upon the Conscience. and Conscience always supposeth the Being of a But I still thought that Englishmen of all denominations

denominations (how widely foever they differ as to fome particular points) agreed in the Belief of a God, and of fo much at least, as is called natural Religion. ALC. I have already told you my own Opinion of those matters, and Probably, Euphranor, by the title of Deifts, which is fometimes given to Minute Philosophers, you have been mis-led to imagine they believe and worship a God according to the light of Nature: but by living among them, you may be convinced of the contrary. They have neither time nor place, nor form of Divine worship; they offer neither Prayers nor Praifes to God in public; and in their private practice shew a contempt or dislike even of the Duties For instance, the faying of natural Religion. Grace before and after meals is a plain point of natural worship, and was once universally practifed, but in proportion as this Sect prevailed it hath been laid afide, not only by the Minute Philosophers themselves, who wou'd be infinitely ashamed of fuch a weakness as to beg God's bleffing, or give God thanks for their daily Food; but also by others who are afraid of being thought Fools by the Minute Philosophers. EUPH. Is it possible that Men who really believe a God, shou'd yet decline paying fo easy and reasonable a Duty for fear of incurring the contempt of Atheists? CRI. I tell you there are many, who believing in their Hearts the truth of Religion, are yet afraid or ashamed to own it, lest they shou'd forfeit their Reputation with those who have the good luck to pass for great wits and Men of genius. ALC. O Euphranor, we must make allowance for Crito's prejudice: he is a worthy Gentleman and means well. But doth it not look like prejudice to ascribe the respect that is paid our ingenious Free-thinkers rather to good luck than to merit? EUPH. I acknowledge their merit to be very wonderful, and that those Authors

Dial I. PHILOSOPHER.

31

thors must needs be great Men who are able to prove fuch Parradoxes: for example, That fo knowing a Man as a Minute Philosopher shou'd be a meer Machine, or at best no better than a ALC. It is a true maxim, that a Man shou'd think with the Learned and speak with the Vulgar. I shou'd be loth to place a Gentleman of merit in such a light, before prejudiced and ignorant Men. The tenets of our Philosophy have this in common with many other Truths, in Metaphyfics, Geometry, Aftronomy and natural Philofophy, that vulgar ears cannot bear them. All our discoveries and notions are in themselves true and certain; but they are at prefent known only to the better fort, and wou'd found strange and odd among the Vulgar. But this, it is to be hoped. will wear off with time. EUP H. I do not wonder that vulgar minds shou'd be startled at the notions of your Philosophy. CRI. Truly a very curious fort of Philosophy, and much to be admired!

XIII. The profound Thinkers of this way have taken a direct contrary course to all the great Philosophers of former ages, who made it their Endeavour to raife and refine Humane Kind, and remove it as far as possible from the Brute; to moderate and subdue Mens Appetites; to remind them of their nature; to awaken and improve their fuperior Faculties and direct them to the noblest Objects; to possess Mens minds with a high Sense of the Divinity, of the supreme Good, and the Immortality of the Soul. They took great pains to strengthen the Obligations to Virtue, and upon all those Subjects have wrought out noble Theories, and treated with fingular force of Reason. But it feems our Minute Philosophers act the reverse of all other wife and thinking Men; it being their end and aim to erafe the Principles of all that is great

You

and good from the mind of Man, to unhinge all order of civil Life, to undermine the foundations of morality, and, instead of improving and ennobling our natures, to bring us down to the maxims and way of thinking of the most uneducated and barbarous nations, and even to degrade Humane Kind to a level with Brute Beafts. the while they wou'd pass upon the World for Men of deep Knowledge. But in effect what is all this negative Knowledge better than downright favage Ignorance? That there is no Providence, no Spirit, no future State, no moral Duty: truly a fine System for an honest Man to own, or an ingenious Man to value himself upon! Alcipbron who heard this discourse with some uneasiness very gravely replied. Disputes are not to be decided by the weight of Authority, but by the force of Reafon. You may pass, indeed, general reflections on our notions and call them brutal and barbarous if you please: But it is such brutality and barbarism as few cou'd have attained to if Men of the greatest Genius had not broke the Ice, there being nothing more difficult than to get the better of Education, and conquer old prejudices. To remove and cast off a heap of Rubbish that has been gathering upon the Soul from our very infancy, requires great courage and great strength of Faculties. Our Philosophers therefore, do well deserve the name of Esprits forts, Men of strong beads, Free-thinkers and fuch like Appellations betokening great force and liberty of mind. It is very possible, the Heroic Labours of these Men may be represented (for what is not capable of mifrepresentation?) as a piratical plundering and stripping the mind of its wealth and ornaments, when it is in truth the divesting it only of its prejudices, and reducing it to its untainted original State of Nature. Oh Nature! the genuine Beauty of pure Nature! EUPH. You feem very much taken with the Beauty of Nature. Be pleased to tell me, Alciphron, what those things are which you esteem natural, or by what

mark I may know them.

XIV. ALC. For a thing to be natural, for instance to the mind of Man, it must appear originally therein, it must be universally in all Men, it must be invariably the fame in all Nations and Ages. These limitations of original, univerfal and invariable exclude all those notions found in the Humane Mind, which are the effect of Custom and Education. The case is the same with respect to all other Species of Beings. A Cat, for example, hath a natural inclination to purfue a Mouse, because it agrees with the forementioned marks. But if a Cat be taught to play tricks. you will not fay those tricks are natural. For the fame reason if upon a Plumbtree, Peaches and Apricots are engrafted, no body will fay they are the natural growth of the Plumbtree. EUPH. But to return to Man: It feems you allow those things alone to be natural to him, which shew themselves upon the first entrance into the World; to wit the Senses and such Passions and Appetites as are discovered upon the first application of their respective objects. ALC. That is my opinion. EUPH. Tell me, Alcipbron, iffrom a young Apple-tree after a certain period of time there shou'd shoot forth Leaves, Blossoms and Apples; wou'd you deny these things to be natural, because they did not discover and display themselves in the tender bud? ALC. I wou'd not. EUPH. And suppose that in a Man after a certain feafon, the Appetite of Lust or the Faculty of Reason shall shoot forth, open and display themselves as Leaves and Blossoms do in a Tree; wou'd you therefore, deny them to be natural to him, because they did not appear in his original infancy? ALC. I acknowledge I would not. EUPH. It feems therefore, that the first mark of a thing's being

being natural to the mind was not warily laid down by you; to wit, that it shou'd appear originally in it. ALC. It feems fo. EUPH. Again, inform me, Alciphron, whether you do not think it natural for an Orange-plant to produce Oranges? ALC. I do. EUPH. But plant it in the North end of Great Britain, and it shall with care produce, perhaps, a good Sallad; in the Southern parts of the fame Island, it may with much pains and culture thrive and produce indifferent Fruit; but in Portugal or Naples it will produce much better with little or no pains. Is this true or not? ALC. It is true. EUPH The plant being the same in all places doth not produce the fame Fruit, Sun, Soil, and Cultivation making a difference. ALC. I grant it. EUPH. And fince the case is, you say the same with respect to all Species; why may we not conclude by a parity of reason that things may be natural to Human Kind. and yet neither found in all Men, nor invariably the same where they are found? ALC. Hold Euphranor, you must explain your self further. I shall not be over hafty in my concessions. LYS. You are in the right, Alciphron, to stand upon your guard. I do not like these ensnaring Questions. EUP H. I desire you to make no concessions in complaisance to me, but only to tell me your opinion upon each particular, that we may understand one another. know wherein we agree, and proceed jointly in finding out the Truth. But (added Euphranor turning to Crito and me) if the Gentlemen are against a free and fair inquiry, I shall give them no further trouble. ALC. Our Opinions will stand the test. We fear no trial, proceed as you pleafe. EUPH. It feems then that from what you have granted it shou'd follow, Things may be natural to Men, although they do not actually shew themselves in all Men, nor in equal perfection; there being as great difference of culture and every other advantage, with

with respect to Humane Nature, as is to be found with respect to the vegetable nature of Plants, to use your own similitude. Is it so or not? ALC. It is. EUP H. Answer me, Alcipbron, do not Men in all times and places when they arrive at a certain Age express their Thoughts by Speech? ALC. They do EUPH. Shou'd it not feem then that Language is natural? ALC. It shou'd. EUPH. And yet there is a great variety of Languages. ALC. I acknowlegde there is. EUPH. From all this will it not follow a thing may be natural and yet admit of variety? ALC. I grant it will. EUPH. Shou'd it not feem therefore to follow, that a thing may be natural to Mankind, though it have not those marks or conditions affigned: though it be not original. universal and invariable? ALC. It shou'd. EUPH. And that confequently religious Worship and civil Government may be natural to Man, notwithstanding they admit of fundry forms and different degrees of Perfection? ALC. It feems fo. EUPH. You have granted already that Reason is natural to Mankind. ALC. I have. EUPH. Whatever therefore is agreeable to Reason is agreeable to the nature of Man. ALC. It is. EUPH. Will it not follow from hence that Truth and Virtue are natural to Man? ALC. Whatever is reasonable I admit to be natural. EUPH. And as those Fruits which grow from the most generous and mature stock, in the choicest foil, and with the best culture, are most esteemed: even fo ought we not to think, those fublime Truths which are the Fruits of mature Thought, and have rationally deduced by Men of the best and most improved understandings, to be the choicest productions of the rational nature of Man? And if so, being in fact reasonable, natural and true, they ought not to be esteemed unnatural whims, errors of education and groundless perjudices, because they are raised and forwarded by manuring

manuring and cultivating our tender minds, because they take early root and fprout forth betimes by the care and diligence of our Instructors. ALC. Agreed, provided still they may be rationally deduced: But to take this for granted, of what Men vulgarly call the Truths of Morality and Religion wou'd be begging the question. EUPH. You are in the right, I do not, therefore, take for granted that they are rationally deduced. I only fuppose that, if they are, they must be allowed natural to Man, or in other words agreeable to, and growing from, the most excellent and peculiar part of Humane Nature. ALC. I have nothing to object to this. EUPH. What shall we think then of your former Assertions? That nothing is natural to Man but what may be found in all Men, in all Nations and Ages of the World: That to obtain a genuine view of Humane Nature, we must extirpate all the effects of Education and Instruction, and regard only the Senses, Appetites and Passions which are to be found originally in all Mankind: That, therefore, the notion of a God can have no foundation in nature, as not being originally in the mind, nor the fame in all Men; Be pleased to reconcile these things with your late concessions, which the force of Truth seems to have extorted from you.

XV. ALC. Tell me, Euphranor, whether Truth be not one and the same uniform invariable thing, and, if so, whether the many different and inconsistent notions which Men entertain of God and Duty be not a plain proof there is no Truth in them. EUPH. That Truth is constant and uniform I freely own, and that consequently Opinions repugnant to each other cannot be true; but I think it will not hence follow they are all alike salse. If among various Opinions about the same thing, one be grounded on clear and evident Rea-

fons,

fons, that is to be thought true, and others only fo far as they confift with it. Reason is the same, and rightly applied will lead to the fame conclusions in all times and places. Socrates two thousand years ago feems to have reasoned himself into the fame notion of a God, which is entertained by the Philosophers of our days, if you will allow that name to any who are not Atheists. And the remark of Confucius, That a Man shou'd guard in his youth against Lust, in manhood against Faction, and in old age against Covetousness is as current morality in Europe as in China. ALC. But still it wou'd be a fatisfaction if all Men thought the fame way, difference of Opinions implying uncertainty. EUPH. Tell me, Alcipbron, what you take to be the cause of a Lunar Eclipse. ALC. The shadow of the Earth interposing between the EUPH. Are you affured of this? Sun and Moon. ALC. Undoubtedly. EUPH. Are all Mankind agreed in this Truth? ALC. By no means. Ignorant and barbarous People affign different ridiculous causes of this appearance. EUPH. It seems then there are different Opinions about the nature of an Eclipse. ALC. There are. EUPH. And nevertheless one of these Opinions is true. ALC. It is. EUPH. Diversity therefore of Opinions about a thing doth not hinder, but that the thing may be, and one of the Opinions concerning it may be true. ALC. I acknowledge it. EUPH. It shou'd seem, therefore, that your Argument against the Belief of a God from the variety of Opinions about his nature is not conclusive. do I see how you can conclude against the truth of any moral or religious tenet, from the various Opinions of Men upon the same Subject; might not a Man as well argue, that no historical account of a matter of fact can be true, when different relations are given of it? Or may we not as well infer, fer, that because the several Sects of Philosophy maintain different opinions, none of them can be in the night, not even the Minute Philosophers themfelves? During this conversation Lysicles seemed uneasy, like one that wished in his heart there was no God. Alcipbron, faid he, me-thinks you fit by very tamely, while Eupbranor faps the foundation of our Tenets. Be of good courage, replied Alciphron, a skilful gamester has been known to ruin his adverfary by yielding him fome advantage at first. I am glad, said he turning to Eupbranor, that you are drawn in to argue and make your appeals to Reason. For my part, wherever Reason leads I shall not be afraid to follow. Know then, Euphranor, that I freely give up what you now contend for. I do not value the success of a few crude notions thrown out in a loofe discourse, any more than the Turks do the loss of that vile infantry they place in the front of their armies, for no other end but to waste the powder and blunt the swords of their enemies. Be affured I have in referve a body of other-guess arguments, which I am ready to produce. I will undertake to prove -EUPH. O Alcipbron! I do not doubt your faculty of proving. But before I put you to the trouble of any farther proofs, I shou'd be glad to know whether the notions of your Minute Philosophy are worth proving. I mean, whether they are of use and service to Mankind?

XV. ALC. As to that, give me leave to tell you, a thing may be useful to one Man's Views, and not to another's: but Truth is Truth whether useful or not, and must not be measured by the Convenience of this or that Man, or party of Men. EUPH. But is not the general Good of Mankind to be regarded as a rule and measure of moral Truths, of all such Truths as direct or influence the moral Actions of Men? ALC. That Point is not clear to me. I

know, indeed, that Legislators, and Divines, and Politicians have always alledged, That it is neceffary to the well-being of Mankind, that they shou'd be kept in awe by the flavish Notions of Religion and Morality. But granting all this, how will it prove these Notions to be true? Convenience is one thing, and Truth is another. A genuine Philosopher, therefore, will overlook all Advantages and consider only Truth it self as such. EUP H. Tell me, Alciphron, is your genuine Philosopher a wise Man, or a Fool? ALC. Without question, the wifest of Men. EUPH. Which is to be thought the wife Man, he who acts with design, or he who acts at random? ALC. He who acts with defign. EUPH. Whoever acts with defign, acts for fome end. Doth he not? ALC. He doth. EUPH. And a wife Man for a good end? ALC. True. EUPH. And he sheweth his wisdom in making choice of fit means to obtain his end. ALC. I acknowledge it. EUPH. By how much therefore the end proposed is more excellent, and by how much fitter the means employ'd are to obtain it, so much the wifer is the Agent to be esteemed. ALC. This feems to be true. EUPH. Can a rational Agent propose a more excellent end than Happines? ALC. He cannot. EUPH. Of good things, the greater Good is most excellent, ALC. Doubtless. EUP H. Is not the general happiness of Mankind a greater Good, than the private happiness of one Man, or of some certain Men? ALC. It is. EUPH. Is it not therefore the most excellent end? ALC. It feems fo. EUPH. Are not then those who pursue this end by the properest methods to be thought the wifest Men? ALC. I grant they are. EUPH. Which is a wife Man govern'd by, wife or foolish Notions? ALC. By wife, doubtless. EUPH. It feems then to follow, that he who promotes the general well-being of Mankind by the proper neces-D 2

fary means, is truly wife, and acts upon wife grounds. ALC. It shou'd seem so. EUPH. And is not Folly of an opposite nature to Wisdom? ALC. It is. EUPH. Might it not therefore be inferred, that those Men are foolish who go about to unhinge fuch Principles as have a necessary connexion with the general good of Mankind? ALC. Perhaps this might be granted: but at the same time I must observe, that it is in my power to deny EUPH. How! you will not furely deny the Conclusion, when you admit the Premises. ALG. I wou'd fain know upon what terms we argue; whether in this progress of Question and answer, if a Man makes a flip it be utterly irretrievable? For if you are on the catch to lay hold of every advantage, without allowing for furprise or inattention, I must tell you this is not the way to convince my Judgment. EUPH. O Alcipbron! I aim not at Triumph, but at Truth. You are therefore at full liberty to unravel all that hath been faid, and to recover or correct any slip you have made. But then you must distinctly point it out: otherwise it will be impossible ever to arrive at any conclusion. ALC. I gree with you upon these terms jointly to proceed in fearch of Truth, for to that I am fincerely devoted. In the progress of our present Inquiry I was, it feems, guilty of an overfight, in acknowledging the general happiness of Mankind to be a greater Good than the particular happiness of one Man. For in fact, the individual happiness of every Man alone, constitutes his own entire Good. The happiness of other Men making no part of mine, is not with respect to me a Good: I mean a true natural Good. It cannot therefore be a reasonable end to be proposed by me in Truth and Nature, (for I do not speak of political pretences) since no wife Man will purfue an end which doth not concern him. This is the voice of Nature. Oh Nature!

ture! thou art the fountain, original, and pattern of all that is good and wife. EUPH. You wou'd like then to follow Nature, and propose her as a guide and pattern for your imitation. ALC. Of all things. EUPH. Whence do you gather this respect for Nature? ALC. From the excellency of her Productions. EUPH. In a Vegetable, for instance, you fay there is use and excellency, because the feveral parts of it are so connected and fitted to each other, as to protect and nourish the whole, make the individual grow, and propagate the kind, and because in its fruits or qualities it is adapted to please the Sense, or contribute to the benefit of Man. ALC. Even fo. EUPH. In like manner, do you not infer the excellency of Animal Bodies from observing the frame and fitness of their several parts, by which they mutually conspire to the well-being of each other as well as of the whole? Do you not also observe a natural union and consent between Animals of the fame kind, and that even different kinds of Animals have certain qualities and instincts whereby they contribute to the exercife, nourishment, and delight of each other? Even the inanimate unorganized Elements feem to have an excellence relative to each other. Where was the excellency of Water if it did not cause Herbs and Vegetables to spring from the Earth, and put forth flowers and fruits? And what wou'd become of the beauty of the Earth, if it was not warmed by the Sun, moistened by Water, and fanned by Air? Throughout the whole System of the visible and natural World, do you not perceive a mutual connection and correspondence of parts? And is it not from hence that you frame an Idea of the perfection, and order, and beauty of Nature? ALC. All this I grant. EUPH. And have not the Stoics heretofore faid (who were no more Bigots than you are) and did you not your felf fay, D 3

this pattern of Order was worthy the imitation of rational Agents? ALC. I do not deny this to be true. EUPH. Ought we not therefore to infer the fame Union, Order, and Regularity in the moral World that we perceive to be in the natural? ALC. We ought. EUPH. Shou'd it not therefore feem to follow that reasonable Creatures were, as the philosophical Emperor + observes, made one for another; and consequently that Man ought not to consider himself as an independent Individual, whose happiness is not connected with that of other Men? but rather as the part of a whole, to the common good of which he ought to conspire, and order his Ways and Actions fuitably, if he wou'd live according to Nature, ALC. Supposing this to be true, what then? EUPH. Will it not follow that a wife Man shou'd consider and pursue his private Good, with regard to, and in conjunction with, that of other Men? in granting of which, you thought yourfelf guilty of an overfight. Though, indeed, the sympathy of pain and pleafure, and the mutual affections by which Mankind are knit together, have been always allowed a plain proof of this point: And though it was the conftant Doctrine of those, who were esteemed the wifest and most thinking Men among the Ancients, as the Platonists, Peripatetics, and Stoics; to fay nothing of Christians, whom you pronounce to be an unthinking prejudiced fort of people. ALC. I shall not dispute this point with you. EUPH. Since therefore we are fo far agreed, shou'd it not feem to follow from the Premises; That the belief of a God, of a future State, and of moral Duties, are the only wife, right, and genuine Principles of Humane Conduct, in case they have a neceffary connection with the well-being of Mankind? This Conclusion you have been led to by your own

concessions and by the analogy of Nature. ALC. I have been drawn into it step by step through several preliminaries, which I cannot well call to mind; but one thing I observe, that you build on the necessary connection those Principles have with the well-being of Mankind, which is a point neither proved nor granted. LYS. This I take to be a grand fundamental Prejudice, as I doubt not, if I had time I cou'd make appear. But it is now late, and we will, if you think fit, defer this Subject till to-morrow. Upon which Motion of Lysicles we put an end to our conversation for that Evening.

ANGRED CITE BATTO CONTROL

The SECOND DIALOGUE.

I. Vulgar Error, that Vice is burtful. II. The Benefit of Drunkenness, Gaming, and Whoring. III. Prejudice against Vice wearing off. IV. Its Usefulness illustrated in the Instances of Callicles and Telefilla. V. The Reasoning of Lysicles in behalf of Vice, examined. VI. Wrong to punish Actions, when the Doctrines whence they flow are tolerated. VII. Hazardous Experiment of the Minute Philosophers. VIII. Their Doctrine of Circulation and Revolution. IX. Their Sense of a Reformation. X. Riches alone not the public Weal. XI. Authority of Minute Philo-Sophers: Their Prejudice against Religion. XII. Ef. feets of Luxury: Virtue, whether notional? XIII. Pleasure of Sense. XIV. What fort of Pleasure most natural to Man. XV. Dignity of Human Nature. XVI. Pleafure mistaken. XVII. Amusements, Mifery, and Cowardise of Minute Philosaphers. XVIII. Rakes cannot reckon. XIX. Abilities and Success of Minute Philosophers. XX. Happy Effects of the Minute Philosophy in particular Inflances. XXI. Their free Notions about Government. XXII. England the proper Soil for Minute Philofophy. XXIII. The Policy and Address of its Professors. XXIV. Merit of Minute Philosophers towards the Public. XXV. Their Notions and Character. XXVI. Their Tendency towards Popery and Slavery.

I.N EXT Morning, Alcipbron and Lysicles said the Weather was so fine they had a mind to spend the Day abroad, and take a cold Dinner under a Shade in some pleasant part of the Country. Whereupon, after Breakfast, we went down to a Beach about half a mile off; where we walked on the smooth fand, with the Ocean on one hand, and on the other wild broken Rocks, intermixed with shady Trees and Springs of Water, till the Sun began to be uneafy. We then withdrew into a hollow Glade, between two Rocks, where we had no fooner feated our felves but Lysicles addressing himfelf to Euphranor, faid: I am now ready to perform what I undertook last Evening, which was to shew, that there is nothing in that necessary Connection which some Men imagine between those Principles you contend for, and the public Good. I freely own. that if this Question was to be decided by the authority of Legislators or Philosophers, it must go against us. For those Men generally take it for granted, that Vice is pernicious to the Public; and that Men cannot be kept from Vice but by the fear of God, and the fense of a future State: whence they are induced to think the belief of fuch things necessary to the well-being of humane Kind. This false notion hath prevailed for many ages in the World, and done an infinite deal of mischief, being in truth the cause of religious Establishments, and gaining the protection and encouragement of Laws and Magistrates to the Clergy and their Superstitions.

perstitions. Even some of the wifest among the Ancients, who agreed with our Sect in denying a Providence and the Immortality of the Soul, had nevertheless the weakness to lie under the common prejudice that Vice was hurtful to Societies of Men. But England hath of late produced great Philofophers who have undeceived the world, and proved to a demonstration that private Vices are public This Discovery was referved to our Benefits. times, and our Sect hath the glory of it. CR I. It is possible some Men of fine Understanding might in former ages have had a glimpfe of this important Truth; but it may be prefumed they lived in ignorant times and bigotted countries, which were not ripe for fuch a discovery. LYS. Men of narrow capacities and short fight being able to fee no further than one link in a chain of Confequences, are shocked at small evils which attend upon Vice. But those who can enlarge their view, and look through a long feries of events, may behold Happiness resulting from Vice, and Good springing out of Evil in a thousand instances. To prove my point I shall not trouble you with Authorities or far-fetched Arguments, but bring you to plain Matter of Fact. Do but take a view of each particular Vice, and trace it through its Effects and Confequences, and then you will clearly perceive the advantage it brings to the Public.

II. Drunkenness, for instance, is by your sober Moralists thought a pernicious Vice; but it is for want of considering the good effects that flow from it. For in the first place it encreases the Malt-Tax, a principal branch of his Majesty's Revenue, and thereby promotes the safety, strength, and glory of the Nation. Secondly it employs a great number of hands, the Brewer, the Malster, the Ploughman, the dealer in Hops, the Smith, the Carpenter,

Carpenter, the Brasier, the Joiner, with all other artificers necessary to supply those enumerated, with their respective instruments and utenfils. All which advantages are procured from Drunkenness in the vulgar way, by strong Beer. This point is fo clear it will admit of no dispute. But while you are forced to allow thus much, I foresee you are ready to object against Drunkenness occasion'd by Wine and Spirits, as exporting wealth into foreign countries. But you do not reflect on the number of hands which even this fets on work at home: The Distillers, the Vintners, the Merchants, the Sailors, the Shipwrights, with all those who are employ'd towards victualling and fitting out Ships, which upon a nice computation will be found to include an incredible variety of Trades and Callings. Then for freighting our Ships to answer these foreign importations, all our manufactures throughout the Kingdom are employ'd, the Spinners, the Weavers, the Dyers, the Wool-combers, the Carriers, the Packers. And the fame may be faid of many other manufactures, as well as the woollen. And if it be further confidered. how many Men are enriched by all the forementioned ways of trade and business, and the expences of these Men, and their families, in all the several articles of convenient and fashionable living, whereby all forts of trades and callings, not only at home, but throughout all parts wherever our commerce reaches, are kept in employment, you will be amazed at the wonderfully extended fcene of benefits which arise from the single vice of Drunkenness, so much run down and declaimed against by all grave Reformers. With as much judgment your half-witted folk are accustomed to censure Gaming. And indeed (fuch is the ignorance and folly of Mankind) a Gamester and a Drunkard are thought no better than public nusances, when in truth,

truth, they do each in their way greatly conduce to the public benefit. If you look only on the furface and first appearance of things, you will no doubt think playing at Cards a very idle and fruitless occupation. But dive deeper, and you shall perceive this idle amusement employs the Card maker, and he fets the Paper-mills at work, by which the poor Rag-man is supported; not to mention the Builders and workers in wood and iron that are employ'd in erecting and furnishing those Mills. Look still deeper, and you shall find that Candles and Chairhire employ the industrious and the poor, who by these means come to be relieved by Sharpers and Gentlemen, who wou'd not give one penny in charity. But you will fay that many Gentlemen and Ladies are ruined by play, without confidering that what one Man loses another gets, and that confequently as many are made as ruined; money changeth hands, and in this circulation the life of bufiness and commerce consists. When money is fpent, it is all one to the Public who fpends it. Suppose a fool of quality becomes the dupe of a Man of mean birth and circumstance, who has more wit. In this case what harm doth the Public suftain? Poverty is relieved, Ingenuity is rewarded, the Money stays at home, and has a lively circulation, the ingenious Sharper being enabled to fet up an equipage and fpend handfomely, which cannot be done without employing a world of people. But you will perhaps object, that a Man reduced by play may be put upon desperate courses hurtful to the Public. Suppose the worst, and that he turns Highwayman, such Men have a short life While he lives, he fpends, and for and a merry. one that he robs makes twenty the better for his expence. And when his time is come, a poor Family may be relieved by fifty or a hundred Pounds fet upon his Head. A vulgar eye looks on many a Man

Man as an idle or mischievous fellow, whom a true Philosopher viewing in another light, confiders as a Man of pleasant occupation who diverts himself, and benefits the Public: And that with so much ease, that he employs a multitude of Men. and fets an infinite Machine in motion, without knowing the good he does, or even intending to do any; which is peculiar to that Gentleman-like way of doing good by Vice. I was confidering Play, and that infenfibly led me to the advantages. which attend robbing on the high-way. beautiful and never enough admired connection of Vices! It wou'd take too much time to shew how they all hang together, and what an infinite deal of good takes its rife from every one of them. word for a favourite Vice, and I shall leave you to make out the rest your felf, by applying the same way of reasoning to all other vices. A poor Girl. who might not have the spending of half a Crown a week in what you call an honest way, no fooner hath the good fortune to be a kept Mistress. but she employs Milliners, Laundresses, Tirewomen, Mercers, and a number of other trades to the benefit of her Country. It wou'd be endless to trace and pursue every particular Vice through its consequences and effects, and shew the vast advantage they all are of to the Public. true Springs that actuate the great Machine of Commerce, and make a flourishing State have been hitherto little understood. Your Moralists and Divines have for fo many ages been corrupting the genuine Sense of mankind, and filling their heads with fuch abfurd principles, that it is in the power of few Men to contemplate real life with an unprejudiced Eye. And fewer still have fufficient Parts and Sagacity to purfue a long train of consequences, relations and dependences, which must be done in order to form a just and entire notion of the public weal. But, as I said before, our Sect hath produced Men capable of these discoveries, who have displayed them in a full light, and made them public for the benefit of their Country.

III. Oh! Said Euphranor, who heard this difcourse with great attention, you Lysicles are the very Man I wanted, eloquent and ingenious, knowing in the principles of your Sect, and willing to impart them. Pray tell me, do these principles find an eafy admission in the World? LYS. They do among ingenious Men and People of fashion, though you will fometimes meet with ftrong prejudices against them in the middle fort, an effect of ordinary Talents and mean Breeding. EUPH. I shou'd wonder if Men were not shocked at notions of fuch a furprifing nature, fo contrary to all Laws, Education, and Religion. LYS. They wou'd be shocked much more if it had not been for the skilful address of our Philosophers, who confidering that most Men are influenced by names rather than things, have introduced a certain polite way of speaking, which lessens much of the abhorrence and prejudice towards Vice. EUPH. Explain me this. LYS. Thus in our Dialect a vicious Man is a Man of pleasure, a Sharper is one that plays the whole game, a Lady is faid to have an affair, a Gentleman to be a gallant, a Rogue in business to be one that knows the World. By this means we have no fuch things as Sots, Debauchees, Whores, Rouges or the like in the beau monde. who may enjoy their vices without incurring difagreeable Appellations. EUPH. Vice then is, it feems, a fine thing with an ugly name. LYS. Be affured it is. EUPH. It shou'd seem then, that Plato's fearing least youth might be corrupted, by those Fables which repensented the Gods vicious. was an effect of his weakness and ignorance. LYS. It was, take my word for it. EUPH. And yet Plate

Plato had kept good Company and lived in a Court, And Cicero who knew the World well had a profound effeem for him. CR I. I tell you, Euphranor, that Plato and Tully might perhaps make a figure in Athens or Rome: But were they to revive in our days, they wou'd pass but for underbred Pedants, there being at most Coffee-houses in London, several able Men who cou'd convince them they knew nothing in, what they are valued so much for, Morals and Politics. LYS. How many long headed Men do I know both in the Court-end and the City with five times Plato's Sense, who care not one straw what notions their Sons have of God or Virtue.

IV. CRI. I can illustrate this Doctrine of Lysicles by examples that will make you perceive its force. Cleophon, a Minute Philosopher, took frict care of his Son's Education and entered him betimes in the principles of his Sect. Callicles (that was his Son's name) being a Youth of parts made a notable progress; insomuch that before he became of age he killed his old covetous Father with vexation. and ruined the Estate he left behind him; or, in other words, made a present of it to the Public, spreading the Dung-hill collected by his Ancestors over the face of the Nation, and making out of one overgrown Effate feveral pretty fortunes for ingenious Men, who live by the vices of the Great. Telefilla, though a Woman of Quality and Spirit, made no figure in the World, till the was instructed by her Husband in the tenets of the Minute Philosophy, which he wifely thought wou'd prevent her giving any thing in charity. From that time the took a turn towards expensive Diversions, particularly deep Play, by which means she foon transferred a confiderable share of his fortune to several acute Men skilled in that Mystery, who wanted it more, and circulated it quicker than her Husband wou'd have done, who in return hath got an Heir to his Estate, having never had a Child before. That same Telefilla, who was good for nothing as long as the believed her Catechism, now thines in all public places, is a Lady of gallantry and fashion, and has by her extravagant parade in Lace and fine Clothes raised a Spirit of expence in other Ladies, very much to the public benefit, though it must be owned to the mortification of many frugal Husbands. While Crito related these facts with a grave face, I could not forbear smiling, which Lysicles observing, superficial minds, said he, may prehaps find fomething to ridicule in these accounts; but all who are Masters of a just way thinking must needs fee that those maxims, the benefit whereof is universal, and the damage only particular to private Persons or Families, ought to be encouraged in a wise Commonwealth. For my part, faid Euphranor, I confess my felf to be rather dazzled and confounded than convinced by your reasoning; which, as you observed yourself, taking in the connection of many diffant points requires great extent of thought to comprehend it. I must therefore intreat you to bear with my defects, fuffer me to take to pieces what is too big to be received at once; and where I cannot keep pace with you, permit me to follow you step by step, as fast as I can. LYS. There is reason in what you say. Every one cannot suddenly take a long concatenation of Arguments.

V. EUPH. Your feveral Arguments feem to center in this, that vice circulates money and promotes industry, which causeth a People to flourish: Is it not so? LYS. It is. EUPH. And the reason that vice produceth this effect is, because it causeth an extravagant consumption which is the most beneficial to the Mansactures, their encouragement consisting in quick demand and high price. LYS. True. EUPH. Hence you think a Drunkard most

beneficial

beneficial to the Brewer and the Vintner, as caufing a quick confumption of Liquor, inafmuch as he drinks more than other Men. LYS. Without doubt. EUPH. Say, Lysicles, who drinks most a sick Man or a healthy? LYS. A healthy, EUPH. And which is healthieft a fober Man or a Drunkard? LYS. A Sober Man. EUPH. A Sober Man therefore in health may drink more than a Drunkard when he is fick. LYS. He may. EUPH. What think you, will a Man confume more Meat and drink in a long life or a short one ? L Y S. In a long. EUPH. A Sober healthy Man, therefore, in a long life may circulate more Money by eating and drinking, than a Glutton or Drunkard in a short one. LYS. What then? EUPH. Why then it shou'd feem, that he may be more beneficial to the Public even in this way of eating and drinking. LYS. I shall never own that temperance is the way to promote drinking. EUPH. But you will own that fickness lessens, and death puts an end to all drinking. The fame Argument will hold, for ought I can see, with respect to all other vices that impair Mens health and shorten their lives. And if we admit this, it will not be fo clear a point that vice hath merit towards the public. LYS. But admitting that some Artificers or Traders might be as well encouraged by the fober Men as the vicious: what shall we say of those who subsist altogether by Vice and Vanity? EUPH. If such there are, may they not be otherwise employ'd without loss to the Public? Tell me, Lyficles, is there any thing in the nature of Vice, as fuch that renders it a public bleffing, or is it only the confumption it occasions? LYS. I have already shewn how it benefits the nation by the confumption of its Manufactures. EUPH. And you have granted that a long and healthy life confumes more than a short fickly one; and you will not deny that many confume more than one. Upon the whole then compute and fay, which is most likely to promote the industry of his Countrymen, a virtuous married Man with a healthy numerous Offspring, and who feeds and cloaths the Orphans in his Neighbourhood, or a fashionable Rake about I wou'd fain know whether Money spent innocently, doth not circulate as well as that spent upon vice. And if fo, whether by your own rule it doth not benefit the Public as much? LYS. What I have proved, I have proved plainly, and there is no need of more words about it. EUPH. You feem to me, to have proved nothing, unless you can make it outthat it is impossible to spend a fortune innocently. I shou'd think the public weal of a Nation confifts in the number and good condition of its Inhabitants; have you any thing to object to this? LYS. I think not. EUP H. To this end which would most conduce. the employing Men in open air and manly exercife, or in fedentary business within doors? LTS. The former I suppose. EUPH. Shou'd it not feem therefore, that building, gardening, and agriculture would employ Men more usefully to the Public, than if Taylors, Barbers, Perfumers, Diftillers and fuch arts were multiplied. LYS. All this I grant; but it makes against you. For what moves Men to build and plant but vanity, and what is vanity but vice? EUP H. But if a Man shou'd do those things for his convenience or pleasure, and in proportion to his fortune, without a foolish oftentation or over-rating them beyond their due value, they would not then be the effect of vice; and how do you know but this may be the case? CRI. One thing I know that the readiest way to quicken that fort of industry, and employ Carpenters, Masons, Smiths, and all such trades wou'd be to put in practice the happy hint of a celebrated Minute Philosopher, who by profound thinking has discovered, that burning the City of London wou'd be be no such bad action, as filly prejudiced People might possibly imagine; inasmuch as it wou'd produce a quick circulation of property, transferring it from the rich to the poor, and employing a great number of Artificers of all kinds. This at least cannot be denied that it hath opened a new way of thinking to our Incendiaries, of which the Public hath of late begun to reap the benefit. EUi'H. I cannot sufficiently admire this ingenious

thought.

..

VI. But methinks it wou'd be dangerous to make it public. CRI. Dangerous to whom? EUP H. In the first place to the publisher. CRI. That is a mistake; for the notion hath been published and met with due applause, in this most wise and happy age of Free-thinking, Free-speaking, Freewriting, and Free-acting. EUPH. How! may a Man then publish and practife such things with impunity? CRI. To speak the truth, I am not fo clear as to the practic part. An unlucky accident now and then befals an ingenious Man. The Minute Philosopher Magirus, being desirous to benefit the Public, by circulating an Estate possesfed by a near Relation who had not the heart to fpend it, foon convinced himself upon these principles, that it wou'd be a very worthy action to dispatch out of the way such a useless fellow, to whom he was next heir. But for this laudable attempt, he had the misfortune to be hanged by an under-bred Judge and Jury. Could any thing be more unjust? EUPH. Why unjust? CRI. Is it not unjust to punish actions, when the principles from which they directly follow are tolerated and applauded by the Public? Can any thing be more inconfistent than to condemn in practice what is approved in speculation. Truth is one and the fame, it being impossible a thing should be practically wrong and speculatively right. Thus much

is certain, Magirus was perfect Master of all this Theory, and argued most acutely about it with a Friend of mine, a little before he did the fact for which he died. LYS. The best on't is the World every day grows wifer. CRI. You mistake, Euphranor, if you think the Minute Philosophers idle Theorists; They are Men of practical views. EUPH. As much as I love Liberty, I shou'd be afraid to live among fuch People; it would be, as Seneca somewhere expresseth it, in libertate bellis ac tyrannis fæviore. LYS. What do you mean by quoting Plato and Seneca? Can you imagine a Free-thinker is to be influenced by the Authority of fuch old fashioned Writers? EUPH. You, Lysicles, and your Friend have often quoted to me ingenious Moderns, profound fine Gentlemen, with new names of Authors in the Minute Philosophy, to whose merits I am a perfect stranger. Suffer me in my turn to cite such Authorities as I know, and have passed for many ages upon the World.

VII. But, Authority apart, what do you fay to Experience? My Observation can reach as far as a private Family; and some wife Men have thought, a Family may be confidered as a small Kingdom. or a Kingdom as a great Family. Do you admit this to be true? LYS. If I fay yes, you'll make an inference, and if I fay no, you'll demand a reafon. The best way is to say nothing at all. There is, I see, no end of answering. EUPH. If you give up the point you undertook to prove, there is an end at once: But if you hope to convince me you must answer my questions, and allow me the liberty to argue and infer. LYS. Well, suppose I admit that a Kingdom may be considered as a great Family. EUP H. I shall ask you then, whether ever you knew private Families thrive by those vices, you think so beneficial to the Public? E 2 LTS.

Dial. II. LYS. Suppose I have not. EUPH. Might not a Man therefore by a parity of reason suspect their being of that benefit to the Public? LTS. Fear not; the next age will thrive and flourish. EUPH. Pray tell me, Lysicles; suppose you saw a fruit of a new untried kind; would you recommend it to your own Family to make a full meal of? LYS. I would not. EUPH. Why then would you try upon your own Country these maxims which were never admitted in any other? LYS. The experiment must begin somewhere; and we are resolved our own Country shall have the honour and advantage of it. EUPH. O Lysicles, hath not old England subsisted for many ages without the help of your notions? LYS. She has. EUPH. And made fome figure? LYS. I grant it. EUPH. Why then shou'd you make her run the risque of a new experiment, when it is certain she may do without it? LYS. But we would make her do better. We wou'd produce a change in her that never was feen in any Nation. EUPH. Salluft observes, that a little before the downfal of the Roman Empire, avarice (the effect of Luxury) had erased the good old principles of probity and justice, had produced a contempt for Religion, and made every thing venal, while ambition bred diffimulation, and caused Men to unite in clubs, and parties, not from honourable motives, but narrow and interested views. The same Historian observes of that great Free-thinker Catiline, that he made it his business to infinuate himself into the acquaintance of young Men, whose minds unimproved by years and experience were more easily seduced. I know not how it happens, but these passages have occurred to my Thoughts more than once during this Conversation. LYS. Sallust was a fententious Pedant. EUPH. But confult any Historian, look into any Writer. See, for instance, what Xenophon

Xenophon and Livy fay of Sparta and Rome, and then tell me if Vice be not the likeliest way to ruin and enflave a People. LYS. When a point is clear by its own evidence, I never think it worth while to confult old Authors about it. CRI. It requires much thought and delicate observation to go to the bottom of things. But one who hath come at Truth with difficulty can impart it with ease. I will therefore Euphranor, explain to you in three words (what none of your old Writers ever dreamt of) the true cause of ruin to those States. You must know that Vice and Virtue, being opposite and contradictory Principles, both working at once in a state, will produce contrary effects, which intestine discord must needs tend to the dissolution and ruin of the whole. But it is the defign of our Minute Philosophers, by making Men wicked upon principle, a thing unknown to the Ancients, fo to weaken and destroy the force of virtue, that its effects shall not be felt in the Public. In which case Vice being uncontrolled without let or impediment of principle, pure and genuine without allay of virtue, the Nation must doubtless be very flourishing and triumphant. EUP H. Truly, a noble Scheme! CRI. And in a fair way to take effect. For our young proficients in the Minute Philosophy, having, by a rare felicity of Education, no tincture of bigottry or prejudice, do far outgo the old standers and professors of the Sect; who, though Men of admirable parts, yet, having had the misfortune to be imbued in their Childhood with some religious Notions, cou'd never after entirely get rid of them; but still retain some small grains of conscience and fuperstition, which are a check upon the noblest Genius. In proof of this, I remember that the famous Minute Philosopher old Demodicus came one day, from conversation upon business with Timander, E 3

Timander, a young Gentleman of the same Sect, full of aftonishment. I am surprised, said he, to fee fo young, and withal fo compleat a Villain, and, fuch was the force of prejudice, spoke of Timander with abhorrence, not confidering that he was only the more egregious and profound Philo-

fopher of the two.

VIII. EUF H. Though much may be hoped from the unprejudiced education of young Gentlemen, yet it feems we are not to expect a fettled and intire Happiness, before Vice reigns pure and unmixed: till then, much is to be feared from the dangerous struggle between Vice and Virtue, which may perchance overturn and diffolve this Government, as it hath done others. LYS. No matter for that, if a better comes in its place. We have cleared the land of all Prejudices towards Government or Constitution, and made them fly like other Phantasms before the light of Reason and good Senfe. Men who think deeply cannot fee any reason, why Power shou'd not change hands as well as Property; or why the fashion of a Government shou'd not be changed as easy as that of a Garment. The perpetual circulating and revolving of Wealth and Power, no matter through what or whose hands, is that which keeps up Life and Spirit in a State. Those who are even slightly read in our Philosophy, know that of all Prejudices the fillieft is an attachment to forms. CRI. To fay no more upon fo clear a point, the overturning a Government may be justified upon the fame Principles as the burning a town, wou'd produce parallel effects, and equally contribute to the public good. In both cases, the natural springs of Action are forcibly exerted: and in this general Industry what one loses another gets, a quick circulation of Wealth and Power making the Sum Total to flourish. EUPH. And do the Minute Philosophers

Philosophers publish these things to the World? LYS. It must be confessed our Writers proceed in Politics with greater caution than they think neceffary with regard to Religion. CRI. But those things plainly follow from their Principles, and are to be admitted for the genuine Doctrine of the Sect, expressed perhaps with more freedom and perspicuity, than might be thought prudent by those who wou'd manage the Public, or not offend weak brethren. EUP H. And pray, is there not need of caution, a Rebel, or Incendiary being Characters that many Men have a prejudice against? LYS. Weak People of all ranks have a world of absurd Prejudices. EUPH. But the better fort, such as Statesmen and Legislators: do you think they have not the fame Indisposition towards admitting your Principles? LYS. Perhaps they may; but the reason is plain. CRI. This. puts me in mind of that ingenious Philosopher, the Gamester Glaucus, who used to say, that Statesmen and Lawgivers may keep a flir about right and wrong, just and unjust, but that, in truth, Property of every kind had so often passed from the right owners by fraud and violence, that it was now to be confidered as lying on the common, and with equal right belonged to every one that cou'd feize it. EUP H. What are we to think then of Laws and Regulations relating to Right and Wrong, Crimes and Duties? LYS. They ferve to bind weak minds, and keep the Vulgar in awe: But no sooner doth a true Genius arise, but he breaks his way to Greatness through all the trammels of Duty, Conscience, Religion, Law; to all which he sheweth himself infinitely superior.

IX. EUPH. You are, it feems, for bringing about a thorough Reformation. LYS. As to what is commonly called the Reformation, I cou'd never fee how or wherein the World was the better

forit. It is much the same as Popery, with this difference, that it is the more prude-like and difagreeable thing of the two. A noted Writer of ours makes it too great a compliment, when he computes the benefit of Hooped-petticoats to be nearly equal to that of the Reformation. Thorough Reformation is thorough Liberty. Leave Nature at full freedom to work her own way, and This is what we aim at, and noall will be well. thing short of this can come up to our Principles. Crito, who is a zealous Protestant, hearing these words, cou'd not refrain. The worst effect of the Reformation, faid he, was the rescuing wicked Men from a darkness which kept them in awe. This, as it hath proved, was holding out Light to Robbers and Murderers. Light in it felf is good, and the same Light which shews a Man the folly of Superstition, might shew him the truth of Religion, and the madness of Atheism. But to make use of Light only to see the Evils on one side, and never to fee, but to run blindly upon the worfe extreme, this is to make the best of things produce Evil, in the same sense that you prove the worst of things to produce Good, to wit, accidentally or indirectly: and by the fame method of arguing, you may prove that even Diseases are useful: but whatever benefit feems to acrue to the Public, either from difease of Mind or Body, is not their genuine offspring, and may be obtained without them. Lysicles was a little disconcerted by the affirmative air of Crito; but after a short pause replied briskly. That to contemplate the public good was not every one's talent. True, faid Euphranor, I question whether every one can frame a notion of the public good, much less judge of the means to promote it.

X. But you, Lysicles, who are master of this subject, will be pleased to inform me, whether the public public good of a Nation doth not imply the particular good of its Individuals? LYS. It doth. EUPH. And doth not the good or happiness of a Man confift in having both Soul and Body found and in good condition, enjoying those things which their respective Natures require, and free from those things which are odious and hurtful to them. LYS. I do not deny all this to be true. EUPH. Now it shou'd feem worth while to consider, whether the regular decent life of a virtuous Man may not as much conduce to this end, as the mad fallies of Intemperance and Debauchery. LYS. I will acknowledge that a Nation may merely fubfift, or be kept alive, but it is impossible it shou'd flourish without the aid of Vice. To produce a quick circulation of Traffick and wealth in a State, there must be exorbitant and irregular motions in the Appetites and Paffions. EUPH. The more people a Nation contains, and the happier those people are, the more that Nation may be faid to flourish. I think we are agreed in this point. LTS. We are. EUPH. You allow then that Riches are not an ultimate end, but shou'd only be considered as the means to procure Happiness. LYS. I do. EUPH. It feems, that means cannot be of use without our knowing the end, and how to apply them to it. LYS. It feems fo. EUPH. Will it not follow, that in order to make a Nation flourish, it is not sufficient to make it wealthy. without knowing the true end and happiness of Mankind, and how to apply wealth towards attaining that end? In proportion as these points are known and practifed. I think the Nation shou'd be likely to flourish. But for a people who neither know nor practife them, to gain riches, feems to me the same advantage that it wou'd be for a fick Man to come at plenty of meat and drink, which he cou'd not use but to his hurt. LYS. This is meer fophistry; it is arguing without perfuading. Look

Look into common Life; examine the pursuits of Men; have a due respect for the consent of the World; and you will soon be convinced, that Riches alone are sufficient to make a Nation sourishing and happy. Give them Riches and they will make themselves happy, without that political Invention, that Trick of Statesmen and Philosophers, called Virtue.

XI. EUPH. Virtue then, in your account, is 2 Trick of Statesmen. LYS. It is. EUPH. Why then do your fagacious Sect betray and divulge that Trick or Secret of State, which wife Men have judged necessary for the good Government of the World? Lysicles hefitating, Crita made answer, that he presumed it was because their Sect. being wifer than all other wife Men, disdained to fee the World governed by wrong Maxims, and wou'd fet all things on a right bottom. EUPH. Thus much is certain. If we look into all institutions of Government, and the political Writings of fuch as have heretofore passed for wife Men, we shall find a great regard for Virtue. LYS. You shall find a strong tineture of Prejudice: But, as I faid before, confult the Multitude if you wou'd find Nature and Truth. EUPH. But among Country Gentlemen, and Farmers, and the better fort of Tradesmen, is not Virtue a reputable thing? LYS. You pick up Authorities among Men of low life and vile education. E.UPH. Perhaps we ought to pay a decent respect to the Authority of Minute Philosophers. LYS. And I wou'd fain know whose Authority shou'd be more considered, than that of those Gentlemen who are alone above Prejudice, and think for themselves. EUPH. How doth it appear that you are the only unprejudiced part of Mankind? May not a Minute Philofopher, as well as another Man, be prejudiced in favour of the leaders of his Sect? May not an atheistical Education prejudice towards Atheifm?

theism? What shou'd hinder a Man's being prejudiced against Religion, as well as for it? Or can you assign any reason why an attachment to Pleasure, Interest, Vice, or Vanity, may not be supposed to prejudice Men against Virtue? LYS. This is pleasant? What! Suppose those very Men insuenced by Prejudice, who are always disputing against it, whose constant aim is to detect and demolish Prejudices of all kinds! Except their own, replied Crite, for you must pardon me, if I cannot help thinking they have some small Prejudice, though not in savour of Virtue.

XII. I observe, Lysicles, that you allowed to Eupbranor, the greater number of happy People are in a State, the more that State may be faid to flourish; it follows therefore, That such methods as multiply Inhabitants are good, and fuch as diminish them are bad for the Public. And one wou'd think no body need be told, that the frength of a state consists more in the number and fort of People, than in any thing else. But in proportion as Vice and Luxury, those public bleffings encouraged by this Minute Philosophy, prevail among us, fewer are disposed to marry, too many being diverted by Pleasure, disabled by Disease, or frightned by Expence. Nor doth Vice only thin a Nation, but also debaseth it by a puny degenerate Race. I might add, that it is ruinous to our Manufactures, both as it makes labour dear, and thereby enables our more frugal Neighbours to underfel us; and also as it diverts the lower sort of People from honest Callings to wicked Projects. If these and fuch confiderations were taken into the account, I believe it wou'd be evident to any Man in his fenses, that the imaginary benefits of Vice bear no proportion to the folid real woes that attend it. Lyficles, upon this, shook his head, and smiled at Crito, without youchsafing any other anfwer.

Dial. II fwer. After which, addressing himself to Eupbranor, There cannot, faid he, be a stronger instance of Prejudice, than that a Man shou'd at this time of day preserve a reverence for that idol Virtue, a thing so effectually exposed and exploded by the most knowing Men of the age, who have shewn, that a Man is a meer engine, play'd upon and driven about by fenfible objects; and that moral Virtue is only a Name, a Notion, Chimæra, an Enthusiasm, or at best a Fashion, uncertain and changeable, like all other Fashions. EUPH. What do you think, Lysicles, of Health; doth it depend on Fancy and Caprice, or is it fomethin real in the bodily composition of a Man? LYS. Health is something real, which results from the right Constitution and Temperature of the Organs and the Fluids circulating through them. EUPH. This you fay is health of Body. LYS. It is EUPH. And may we not suppose an healthy conflitution of Soul, when the Notions are right, the Judgments true, the Will regular, the Passions and Appetites directed to their proper objects, and confined within due bounds? This, in regard to the Soul, feems what Health is to the Body. And the Man whose mind is so constituted, is he not properly called virtuous? And to produce this healthy disposition in the minds of his Countrymen, shou'd not every good Man employ his endeavours? If these things have any appearance of Truth, as to me they feem to have, it will not then be so clear a point that Virtue is a meer whim or fashion, as you are pleased to represent it: I must own something unexpectedly, after what had been discoursed in last Evening's Conference, which if you wou'd call to mind, it might perhaps fave both of us some trouble. LYS. Wou'd you know the truth, Euphranor? I must own I have quite forgot all your discourse about Virtue, Duty,

Duty, and all fuch Points, which being of an airy notional nature, are apt to vanish, and leave no trace on a mind accustomed only to receive Imprefion from Realities.

XIII. Having heard these words, Euphranor looked at Crito and me, and faid fmiling, I have mistaken my part; it was mine to learn, and his to instruct. Then addressing himself to Lysicles, Deal faithfully, faid he, and let me know whether the public Benefit of Vice be in truth that which makes you plead for it? LYS. I love to speak frankly what I think. Know then, that private Interest is the first and principal consideration with Philosophers of our Sect. Now of all Interests Pleasure is that which hath the strongest charms. and no Pleasures like those which are heightned and enlivened by licence. Herein confift the peculiar excellency of our Principles, that they shew People how to ferve their Country by diverting themselves, causing the two streams of public Spirit and Self-love to unite and run in the fame channel. I have told you already, that I admit a Nation might subsist by the rules of Virtue. But give me leave to fay, it will barely fubfift, in a dult joyless insipid state, whereas the sprightly excesses of Vice inspire Men with joy: And where Particulars rejoice, the Public, which is made up of Particulars must do so too; that is, the Public must be happy. This I take to be an irrefragable argument. But to give you its full force, and make it as plain as possible, I will trace things from their original. Happiness is the end to which created beings naturally tend, but we find that all Animals, whether Men or Brutes, do naturally and principally pursue real Pleasure of Sense, which is therefore to be thought their supreme Good, their true End and Happiness. It is for this Men live, and whoever understands Life must allow that

Man to enjoy the top and flower of it, who hath a quick fenfe of Pleasure, and withal Spirit, Skill, and Fortune sufficient to gratify every appetite and every tafte. Niggards and Fools will envy or traduce such a one because they cannot equal him. Hence, all that fober trifling in disparagement of what every one wou'd be master of if he cou'd, a full freedom and unlimited fcope of Pleafure. EUPH. Let me see whether I understand vou. Pleasure of Sense, you say, is the chief Pleasure. LYS. I do. EUPH. And this wou'd be crampt and diminished by Virtue. LYS. It won'd EUPH. Tell me, Lysicles, is Pleasure then at the height when the Appetites are fatisfied? LYS. There is then only an Indolence, the lively fense of Pleasure being past. EUP H. It shou'd feem therefore, that the appetites must be always craving to preferve Pleasure alive. LYS. That is our fense of the matter. EUPH. The Greek Philosopher therefore was in the right, who confidered the body of a Man of pleasure as a leaky Vessel, always filling and never full. LYS. You may divert your felf with Allegories, if you pleafe. But all the while ours is literally the true taste of Nature. Look throughout the Universe, and you shall find Birds and Fishes, Beasts and Insects, all kinds of Animals, with which the Creation swarms constantly engaged by instinct in the pursuit of fenfible Pleafure. And shall Man alone be the grave fool who thwarts, and croffes, and fubdues his appetites, while his fellow-creatures do all most joyfully and freely indulge them? EUPH. How! Lysicles! I thought that being governed by the Senfes, Appetites, and Passions, was the most grievous Slavery; and that the proper business of Freethinkers, or Philosophers, had been to set Men free from the power of Ambition, Avarice, and Senfuality. LYS. You mistake the point. We make

Dial. II. PHILOSOPHER. 67
make Men relish the World, attentive to their in-

make Men relish the World, attentive to their Interests, lively and luxurious in their Pleasures, without fear or restraint either from God or Man. We despise those preaching Writers, who used to disturb or cramp the pleasures and amusements of Human Life. We hold, that a wise Man who meddles with business, doth it altogether for his interest, and refers his interest to his pleasure. With us it is a maxim, that a Man shou'd seize the moments as they sly. Without Love, and Wine, and Play, and late hours, we hold Life not to be worth living. I grant, indeed, that there is something gross and ill-bred in the vices of mean Men, which the genteel Philosopher abhors. CR I. But to cheat, whore, betray, get drunk, do all these things decently, this is true wisdom, and e-

legance of tafte.

XIV. EUP H. To me, who have been us'd to another way of thinking, this new Philosophy feems difficult to digeft. I must therefore beg leave to examine its Principles, with the fame freedom that you do those of other Sects. LYS. Agreed. EUP H. You say, if I mistake not, that a wife Man pursues only his private interest, and that this consists in sensual pleasure, for proof whereof you appeal to Nature. Is not this what you advance? LYS. It is. EUPH. You conclude therefore. that as other Animals are guided by natural instinct, Man too ought to follow the dictates of fense and appetite. LYS. I do. EUPH. But in this, do you not argue as if Man had only fense and appetite for his guides, on which supposition there might be truth in what you fay? But what if he hath intellect, reason, a higher instinct and a nobler life? If this be the case, and you being Man, live like a Brute, is it not the way to be defrauded of your true happiness? to be mortified and disappointed? Confider most forts of Brutes; you shall perhaps

perhaps find them have a greater share of sensual happiness than Man. LYS. To our forrow we This hath made feveral Gentlemen of our Sect envy Brutes, and lament the lot of Humane Kind. CRI. It was a confideration of this fort which inspired Erotylus, with the laudable ambition of wishing himself a fnail, upon hearing of certain particularities discovered in that animal by a modern Virtuoso. EUP H. Tell me, Lysicles, if you had an inexhaustible fund of gold and filver. fhou'd you envy another for having a little more copper than you? LYS. I shou'd not. EUPH. Are not Reason, Imagination, and Sense, Faculties differing in kind, and in rank higher one than another. LYS. I do not deny it. EUPH. Their acts therefore differ in kind. LYS. They do. EUP H. Consequently the pleasures perfective of those acts are also different. LYS. They are. EUPH. You admit therefore three forts of pleasure; pleasure of Reason, pleasure of imagination, and pleasure of Sense. LYS. I do. EUPH. And, as it is reasonable to think, the operation of the highest and noblest faculty to be attended with the highest pleasure, may we not suppose the two former to be as gold or filver, and the latter only as copper? Whence it shou'd feem to follow, that Man need not envy or imitate a Brute. LYS. And nevertheless there are very ingenious Men who do. And furely every one may be allowed to know what he wants, and wherein his true happiness consists. EUPH. Is it not plain that different Animals have different pleasures? Take a Hog from his ditch or dunghil, lay him on a rich bed, treat him with sweet-meats, and music, and perfumes. All these things will be no entertainment to him. Do not a Bird, a Beast, a Fish, amuse themselves in various manners, infomuch that what is pleasing to one may be death to another?

Is it ever feen that one of these Animals quits its own element or way of living, to adopt that of another? And shall Man quit his own Nature to imitate a Brute? LYS. But Sense is not only natural to Brutes; is it not also natural to Man? EUP H. It is, but with this difference, it maketh the Whole of a Brute, but is the lowest part or faculty of a Humane Soul. The nature of any thing is peculiarly that which doth diftinguish it from other things, not what it hath in common with them. Do you allow this to be true? LYS. I do. EUPH. And is not Reason that which makes the principal difference between Man and other Animals? LYS. It is. EUPH. Reason therefore being the principal part of our Nature, whatever is most reasonable shou'd seem most natural to Man. Must we not therefore think rational Pleasures more agreeable to Human Kind, than those of Sense? Man and Beast having different Natures, feem to have different Faculties, different Enjoyments, and different forts of Happiness. You can eafily conceive, that the fort of Life which makes the happiness of a Mole or a Bat, wou'd be a very wretched one for an Eagle. And may you not as well conceive that the happiness of a Brute can never constitute the true happiness of a Man? a Beaft, without Reflection or Remorfe, without Forefight or Appetite of Immortality. without notion of Vice or Virtue, or Order, or Reason, or Knowledge! What motive, what grounds can there be for bringing down Man, in whom are all these things, to a level with such a creature? What merit, what ambition in the Minute Philosopher to make such an Animal a guide or rule for Humane Life?

XV. LYS. It is strange, Euphranor, that one who admits freedom of thought as you do, shou'd yet be such a slave to prejudice. You still talk of F order

order and virtue, as of real things, as if our Philosophers had never demonstrated, that they have no foundation in Nature, and are only the effects of Education. I know, faid Crito, how the Minute Philosophers are accustomed to demonstrate They consider the animal nature of this point. Man, or Man so far forth as he is animal; and it must be owned that considered in that light, he hath no fense of Duty, no notion of Virtue. He therefore, who shou'd look for Virtue among meer animals, or human Kind as fuch, wou'd look in the wrong place. But that Philosopher who is attentive only to the animal part of his Being, and raifeth his Theorys from the very dregs of our Species, might probably upon fecond thoughts find himself mistaken. Look you, Crito, said Lysieles, my argument is with Eupbranor, to whom addreffing his discourse; I observe, said he, that you stand much upon the dignity of Humane Nature. This thing of dignity is an old worn-out notion, which depends on other notions old and stale, and worn-out, fuch as an immaterial Spirit, and a Ray derived from the Divinity. But in these days Men of Sense make a jest of all this Grandeur and Dignity; and many there are wou'd gladly exchange their share of it for the repose and freedom, and fenfuality of a Brute. But comparisons are odious: waving therefore all inquiry concerning the respective excellencies of Man and Beast, and whether it is beneath a Man to follow or imitate Brute Animals, in judging of the chief good and conduct of Life and Manners, I shall be content to appeal to the Authority of Men themselves, for the truth of my notions. Do but look abroad into the World, and ask the common run of Men, whether pleasure of Sense be not the only true, solid, fubstantial good of their kind? EUPH. But might not the same vulgar fort of Men prefer a piece piece of Sign-post Painting to one of Raphael's, or a Grub-street Ballad to an Ode of Horace? Is there not a real difference between good and bad Writing? LYS. There is. EUPH. And yet you will allow that there must be a maturity and improvement of understanding to discern this difference, which doth not make it therefore less real. LYS. I will. EUPH. In the same manner what shou'd hinder, but that there may be in nature a true difference between Vice and Virtue, although it requires some degree of reflection and judgment to observe it? In order to know whether a thing be agreeable to the rational nature of Man, it feems one shou'd rather observe and confult those who have most employ'd or improv'd their Reason. LYS. Well, I shall not insist on consulting the common herd of From the ignorant and groß Vulgar, I might myself appeal in many cases to Men of rank and fashion. EUPH. They are a fort of Men I have not the honour to know much of by my own Observation. But I remember a remark of Aristotle, who was himself a Courtier and knew them well. 'Virtue, faith he, * and good Sense are not the property of high Birth or a great Estate. Nor if they who possess these advantaeges, wanting a taste for rational pleasures, betake themselves to those of Sense; ought we therefore to esteem them eligible, any more than we shou'd the toys and pastimes of Children, because they seem so to them? And indeed one may be allowed to question, whether the truest estimate of things was to be expected from a mind intoxicated with Luxury, and dazzled with the splendor of high living.

Cùm stupet insanis acies fulgoribus, & cùm
Acclinis falsis animus meliora recusat. Hor.
Crito upon this observed, that he knew an English

^{*} Ethic. ad Nicom. 1. 10. c. 6.

Spirits in Great Britain.

XVI. LYS. But why need we have recourse to the judgment of other Men in so plain a case? I appeal to your own breaft, confult that, and then fay if fenfible pleafure be not the chief good of Man. EUPH. I, for my part have often thought those pleasures which are highest in the esteem of sensualists, so far from being the chiefest good, that it feemed doubtful upon the whole, whether they were any good at all, any more than the meer removal of pain. Are not our wants and appetites uneafy? LYS. They are. EUPH. Doth not fensual pleasure consist in satisfying them. LYS. It doth. EUPH. But the cravings are tedious, the fatisfaction momentary. Is it not fo? LYS. It is, but what then? EUPH. Why then it shou'd feem that fenfual pleasure is but a short deliverance from long pain. A long avenue of uneafiness leads to a point of pleasure, which ends in disgust or remorfe. CRI. And he who pursues this ignis fatuus imagines himfelf a Philosopher and Freethinker. LYS. Pedants are governed by words and notions, while the wifer Men of pleafure follow Fact, Nature and Sense. CRI. But what if notional pleasures should in fact prove the most real and lasting? Pure pleasures of Reason and Imagination neither hurt the health, nor waste the fortune, nor gall the conscience. By them the mind is long entertained without loathing or fatiety. On the other hand a notion (which with you it feems passeth for nothing) often embitters the most lively fenfual pleasures, which at bottom will

be found also to depend upon notion more than perhaps you imagine, it being a vulgar remark, that those things are more enjoyed by hope and foretaste of the Soul than by possession. Thus much is yielded, that the actual enjoyment is very fhort, and the alternative of Appetite and Difgust long as well as uneafy. So that, upon the whole, it should feem those Gentlemen, who are called Men of pleasure from their eager pursuit of it, do in reality with a great expence of fortune, eafe, and health purchase pain. LYS. You may spin out plaufible Arguments, but will after all find it a difficult matter to convince me that fo many ingenious Men shou'd not be able to distinguish between things fo directly opposite as pain and pleafure. How is it possible to account for this? CRI. I believe a reason may be affigned for it, but to Men of pleasure no truth is so palatable as a fable. Fove once upon a time having ordered, that pleafure and pain shou'd be mixed in equal proportions in every dose of Humane Life, upon a complaint, that some Men endeavoured to separate what he had joined, and taking more than their share of the fweet, wou'd leave all the four for others, commanded Mercury to put a flop to this evil, by fixing on each Delinquent a pair of invifible Spectacles, which shou'd change the appearance of things, making pain look like pleafure, and pleasure like pain, labour like recreation, and recreation like labour. From that time the Men of Pleasure are eternally mistaking and repenting. LYS. If your Doctrine takes place I wou'd fain know what can be the advantage of a great fortune, which all mankind fo eagerly purfue? CRI. It is a common faying with Eucrates, That a great fortune is an edged tool, which a hundred may come at, for one who knows how to use it, so much eafier is the art of getting than that of spending.

What its advantage is I will not fay, but I will venture to declare what it is not. I am fure that where abundance excludes want, and enjoyment prevents appetite, there is not the quickest sense of those pleasures we have been speaking of, in which the Footman hath often a greater share than his Lord, who cannot enlarge his Stomach in pro-

portion to his Estate.

XVII. Reasonable and well-educated Men of all Ranks have, I believe, pretty much the fame amusements, notwithstanding the difference of their fortunes: But those who are particularly distinguished as Men of pleasure seem to possess it in a very small degree. EUPH. I have heard that among Persons of that character, a game of Cards is esteemed a chief diversion. LYS. Without Cards there cou'd be no living for People of fashion. It is the most delightful way of passing an Evening when Gentlemen and Ladies are got together, who wou'd otherwife be at a lofs what to fay or do with themselves. But a pack of Cards is fo engaging, that it doth not only employ them when they are met, but ferves to draw them toge-Quadrille gives them pleasure in prospect during the dull hours of the day, they reflect on it with delight, and it furnishes discourse when it is CRI. One wou'd be apt to suspect these People of condition pass their time but heavily, and are but little the better for their fortunes, whose chief amusement is a thing in the power of every Porter or Footman, who is as well qualified to receive pleasure from Cards as a Peer. I can easily conceive that when People of a certain turn are got together, they shou'd prefer doing any thing to the ennui of their own conversation; but it is not easy to conceive there is any great pleasure in this. What a Card-table can afford requires neither parts nor fortune to judge of. LYS. Play is a ferious amusement

amusement that comes to the relief of a Man of pleasure, after the more lively and affecting enjoyments of Sense. It kills time beyond any thing, and is a most admirable Anodyne to divert or prevent thought, which might otherwise prey upon the mind. CRI. I can easily comprehend, that no Man upon Earth ought to prize Anodynes for the Spleen, more than a Man of fashion and pleafure. An ancient Sage speaking of one of that character, faith he is made wretched by disappointments and appetites, λυπείται αποτυγχάνων καί επιθυmar. And if this was true of the Greeks who lived in the Sun, and had fo much Spirit, I am apt to think it is still more so of our modern English. Something there is in our climate and complexion, that makes idleness no where so much its own punishment as in England, where an uneducated fine Gentleman pays for his momentary pleasures, with long and cruel intervals of Spleen; for relief of which he is driven into fenfual excesses, that produce a proportionable depression of Spirits, which, as it createth a greater want of pleasures, so it leffens the ability to enjoy them. There is a cast of Thought in the Complexion of an Englishman, which renders him the most unsuccessful Rake in the World. He is (as Aristotle expresseth it) at variance with himself. He is neither Brute enough to enjoy his appetites, nor Man enough to govern them. He knows and feels that what he pursues is not his true good, his reflexion ferving only to shew him that misery which his habitual sloth and indolence will not fuffer him to remedy. At length being grown odious to himfelf, and abhorring his own Company, he runs into every idle Assembly, not from the hopes of pleasure, but merely to refpite the pain of his own mind. Liftless and uneasy at the present, he hath no delight in reflecting on what is past, or in the prospect of any thing to FA come.

come. This Man of pleasure, when after a wretched Scene of vanity and woe his animal nature is worn to the Stumps, wishes and dreads Death by turns, and is fick of living, without having ever tried or known the true life of Man. EUPH. It is well this fort of Life, which is of so little benefit to the owner, conduceth so much to that of the Public. But pray tell me, do these Gentlemen set up for Minute Philosophers? CRI. That Sect you must know contains two forts of Philosophers, the wet and the dry. Those I have been describing are of the former kind. They differ rather in Practice than in Theory. As an old, graver or duller Man from one that is younger, and more capable or fond of pleasure. The dry Philosopher passeth his time but drily. He has the honour of pimping for the Vices of more sprightly Men, who in return offer some small incense to his Vanity. Upon this encouragement, and to make his own mind eafy when it is past being pleased, he employs himself in justifying those excesses he cannot partake in. But to return to our question, those miserable Folk are mighty Men for the Minute Philosophy. EUPH. What hinders them then from putting an end to their lives? CRI. Their not being persuaded of the Truth of what they profess. Some indeed in a fit of despair do now and then lay violent hands on themselves. And as the Minute Philosophy prevails, we daily fee more examples of Suicide. But they bear no proportion to those who wou'd put an end to their lives if they durst. My friend Clinias, who had been one of them, and a Philofopher of rank, let me into the fecret History of their doubts and fears and irrefolute refolutions of making away with themselves, which last he affures me is a frequent topic with Men of pleafure, when they have drunk themselves into a little Spirit. It was by virtue of this mechanical valour, the renowned Philosopher

nion

Philosopher Hermocrates shot himself through the head. The same thing hath since been practifed by feveral others to the great relief of their friends. Splenetic, worried, and frighted out of their wits, they run upon their doom, with the same courage as a Bird runs into the mouth of a Rattle Snake, not because they are bold to die, but because they are afraid to live. Clinius endeavoured to fortify his irreligion, by the discourse and opinion of other Minute Philosophers, who were mutually strengthened in their own unbelief by his. After this manper, authority working in a circle, they endeavoured to atheize one another. But though he pretended even to a demonstration against the Being of a God, yet he cou'd not inwardly conquer his own Belief. He fell fick, and acknowledged this truth, is now a fober Man and a good Christian; owns he was never fo happy as fince he became fuch, nor fo wretched as while he was a Minute Philosopher. And he who has tried both conditions may be allowed a proper judge of both. LYS. Truly a fine account of the brightest and bravest Men of the Age. CRI. Bright and brave are fine attributes. But our Curate is of opinion, that all you Free-thinking Rakes are either Fools or Cowards. Thus he argues; if fuch a Man doth not fee his true Interest, he wants Sense, if he doth but dare not pursue it, he wants Courage. In this manner from the defect of Sense and Courage, he deduceth that whole Species of Men, who are fo apt to value themfelves upon both those qualities. LYS. As for their Courage they are at all times ready to give proof of it; and for their understanding, thanks to nature, it is of a fize not to be measured by Country Parsons.

XVIII. EUPH. But Socrates, who was no Country Parson, suspected your Men of pleasure were such through ignorance. LYS. Ignorance of what ? EUPH. Of the art of computing. It was his opi-

THE MINUTE

Dial. II.

you. EUPH. Do you grant that Sense perceiveth only fensible things? LYS. I do. EUPH. Sense perceiveth only things present. LYS. This too I grant. EUPH. Future Pleasures, therefore, and pleafures of the understanding, are not to be judged of by actual Sense. LYS. They are not. EUPH. Those therefore who judge of pleasure by Senfe, may find themselves mistaken at the foot of the account.

+ Cùm lapidesa chiragra Contudit articulos veteris ramalia fagi, Tum crassos transisse dies lucemque palustrem, Et sibi jam seri vitam ingemuere relictam.

To make a right computation, shou'd you not confider all the faculties and all the kinds of Pleafure, taking into your account the future as well as the prefent, and rating them all according to their true value? CRI. The Epicureans themselves allowed. that Pleasure which procures a greater Pain, or hinders a greater Pleasure, should be regarded as a Pain; and that Pain which procures a greater Pleasure, or prevents a greater Pain, is to be accounted a pleasure. In order therefore to make a true estimate of Pleasure, the great spring of action, and that from whence the conduct of Life takes its bias, we ought to compute intellectual Pleafures and future Pleafures, as well as prefent and fenfible: We ought to make allowance in the valuation of each particular Pleasure, for all the Pains and Evils, for all the Difgust, Remorfe, and Shame that attend it: We ought to regard both kind and quantity, the fincerity, the intenfeness, and the duration of Pleasures. EUPH. And all

^{*} Plato in protag. † Persius, Sat. 5.

these points duly considered, will not Socrates seem to have reason of his side, when he thought ignorance made Rakes, and particularly their being ignorant of what he calls the Science of more and less, greater and smaller, equality and comparison, that is to fay the art of Computing? LYS. All this discourse seems notional. For real abilities of every kind it is well known we have the brightest Men of the age among us. But all those who know the World do calculate that what you call a good Christian, who hath neither a large Conscience, nor unprejudiced Mind, must be unfit for the affairs of it. Thus you fee, while you compute your felves out of pleasure, other compute you out of business. What then are you good for with all your computation? EUPH. I have all imaginable respect for the abilities of Freethinkers. My only fear was, their parts might be too lively for fuch flow talents as Forecast and Computation, the gifts of ordinary Men.

XIX. CRI. I cannot make them the same compliment that Euphranor does. For though I shall not pretend to characterize the whole Sect, yet thus much I may truly affirm, That those who have fallen in my way have been mostly raw Men of pleafure, old Sharpers in business, or a third fort of lazy Sciolists, who are neither Men of business, nor Men of speculation, but set up for judges or critics in all kinds, without having made a progress in any. These, among Men of the World pass for profound Theorifts, and among speculative Men wou'd seem to know the World; a conceited race, equally useless to the affairs and studies of Mankind. Such as these, for the most part, seem to be Sectaries of the Minute Philosophy. I will not deny that now and then you may meet with a Man of easy manners. that, without those faults and affectations, is carried into the party by meer stream of Education, Fafhion,

fhion, or Company; all which do in this age prejudice Men against Religion, even those who mechanically rail at Prejudice. I must not forget that the Minute Philosophers have also a strong party among the Beaux and fine Ladies, and, as affectations out of character are often the ftrongeft, there is nothing fo dogmatical and inconvincible as one of these fine things, when it sets up for Free-thinking. But, be these professors of the Sect never fo dogmatical, their authority muft needs be small with Men of sense: For who wou'd choose for his guide in the search for Truth, a Man whose Thoughts and Time are taken up with Drefs, Visits, and Diversions? Or whose Education hath been behind a Counter, or in an Office? Or whose Speculations have been employed on the forms of business, who are only well read in the ways and commerce of Mankind, in stock-jobbing. purloining, fupplanting, bribing? Or wou'd any Man in his fenses give a fig for Meditations and Discoveries made over a bottle? And yet it is certain, that instead of Thought, Books, and Study, most Free-thinkers are the Proselytes of a drinking Club. Their Principles are often fettled, and decisions on the deepest Points made, when they are not fit to make a bargain. LYS. You forget our Writers, Crito. They make a world of Profelytes. CRI. So wou'd worse Writers in such a cause. Alas! how few read! and of these, how few are able to judge? How many wish your notions true? How many had rather be diverted than instructed? How many are convinced by a title? I may allow your reasons to be effectual, without allowing them to be good. Arguments, in themselves of small weight, have great effect, when they are recommended by a mistaken interest, when they are pleaded for by passion, when they are countenanced by the humour of the age;

and above all, with some fort of Men, when they are against Law, Government, and established Opinions, things which, as a wife or good Man wou'd not depart from without clear evidence, a weak or a bad Man will affect to disparage on the flightest Grounds. LYS. And yet the arguments of our Philosophers alarm. CRI. The force of their reasoning is not what alarms, their contempt of Laws and Government is alarming, their application to the young and ignorant is dangerous. EUPH. But without disputing or disparaging their talent at Ratiocination, it feems very possible their fuccess might not be owing to that alone. May it not in some measure be ascribed to the defects of others, as well as to their own perfections? My friend Eucrates used to say, that the Church wou'd thrive and flourish beyond all opposition, if some certain persons minded Piety more than Politics, Practics than Polemics, Fundamentals than Confectaries, Substance than Circumstance, Things than Notions, and Notions than Words. LYS. Whatever may be the cause, the effects are too plain to be denied. And when a confidering Man observes that our Notions do, in this most learned and knowing age, fpread and multiply, in oppofition to established Laws, and every day gain ground against a body so numerous, so learned, so well supported, protected, encouraged for the fervice and defence of Religion: I say, when a Man observes and considers all this, he will be apt to ascribe it to the force of Truth, and the merits of our cause; which, had it been supported with the revenues and establishments of the Church and Universities, you may guess what a figure it wou'd make, by the figure that it makes without them. EUPH. It is much to be pitied, that the learned professors of your Sect do not meet with the encouragement they deserve. LYS. All in due time.

People begin to open their eyes. It is not impoffible but those revenues that in ignorant times were applied to a wrong use, may hereafter in a more enlightned age, be applied to a better. CRI. But why professors and encouragement for what needs no teaching? An acquaintance of mine has a most ingenious Footman that can neither write nor read, who learned your whole System in half an hour, he knows when and how to nod, shake his head, fmile, and give a hint as well as the ablest Sceptic, and is in fact a very Minute Philoopher. LYS. Pardon me, it takes time to unlearn religious Prejudices, and requires a strong head. CRI. I do not know how it might have been once upon a time. But in the present laudable education, I know feveral who have been imbued with no religious notions at all; and others who have had them so very flight, that they rubbed off without the least pains.

XX. Panope, young and beautiful, under the care of her Aunt, an admirer of the Minute Philosophy, was kept from learning the Principles of Religion, that she might not be accustomed to believe without a reason, nor assent to what she did not comprehend, Panope was not indeed prejudiced with religious notions, but got a notion of Intriguing, and a notion of Play, which ruined her reputation by fourteen, and her fortune by four and twenty. I have often reflected on the different fate of two Brothers in my neighbourhood. Cleon the elder being defigned an accomplish'd Gentleman, was sent to town, had the first part of his education in a great School: What Religion he learned there was foon unlearned in a certain celebrated Society, which, till we have a better, may pass for a nursery of Minute Philosophers. Clean dreffed well, cou'd cheat at cards. had a nice palate, understood the mystery of the Die, was a mighty Man in the Minute Philosophy. And having thined a few years in these accomplishments, he died before thirty, childless, and rotten, expressing the utmost indignation that he cou'd not out-live that old dog his Father; who, having a great notion of polite manners, and knowledge of the World, had purchased them to his favourite Son, with much expence, but had been more frugal in the education of Charephon, the younger Son, who was brought up at a Country-School, and entered a Commoner in the University, where he qualified himself for a Parsonage in his Father's gift, which he is now possessed of, together with the Estate of the Family, and a numerous Offspring. LYS. A pack of unpolish'd cubbs, I warrant. CRI. Less polished, perhaps, but more found, more honest, and more useful than many who pass for fine Gentlemen. Crates, a worthy Justice of the Peace in this County, having had a Son miscarry at London, by the converfation of a Minute Philosopher, used to say with 2 great air of complaint, If a Man spoils my Corn, or hurts my Cattle, I have a remedy against him; but if he spoils my Children, I have none. LYS. I warrant you, he was for penal methods; he wou'd have had a Law to perfecute tender Confciences. CRI. The tender Conscience of a Minute Philofopher! He who tutored the Son of Crates, foon after did justice on himself. For he taught Lycidas, a modest young Man, the Principles of his Sect. Lycidas, in return, debauched his Daughter, an only child, upon which, Charmides (that was the Minute Philosopher's Name) hanged himfelf. Old Bubalion in the City is carking, and starving, and cheating, that his Son may drink and game, keep Mistresses, Hounds, and Horses, and die in a Jail. Bubalion nevertheless thinks himself wife, and passeth for one that minds the main

main chance. He is a Minute Philosopher, which learning he acquired behind the counter, from the works of Prodicus and Tryphon. This fame Bubalion was one night at supper, talking against the Immortality of the Soul, with two or three grave Citizens, one of whom the next day declared himself bankrupt, with five thousand Pound of Bubalion's in his hands, and the night following he received a note from a Servant, who had during his lecture waited at table, demanding the fum of fifty guineas to be laid under a stone, and concluding with most terrible threats and imprecations. LYS. Not to repeat what hath been already demonstrated. That the Public is at bottom no fufferer by fuch accidents, which in truth are inconvenient only to private persons, who in their turn too may reap the benefit of them; I fay, not to repeat all that hath been demonstrated on that head, I shall only ask you whether there wou'd not be Rakes and Rogues, although we did not make them? Believe me, the World always was, and always will be the same, as long as Men are Men. CRI. I deny that the World is always the fame. Humane Nature, to use Alcipbron's comparison, is like Land, better or worse, as it is improved, and according to the Seeds or Principles fown in it. Though no body held your Tenets, I grant there might be bad Men by the force of corrupt appetites and irregular paffions: But where Men, to the force of appetite and passion, add that of opinion, and are wicked from Principle, there will be more Men wicked, and those more incurably and outragiously fo. The error of a lively Rake lies in his passions, and may be reformed: But the dry Rogue who fets up for judgment, is incorrigible. It is an observation of Aristotle's, That there are two forts of Debauchees, the axparis, and the axidaros, of which the one is so against his

tice.

his judgment, the other with it, and that there may be hopes of the former, but none of the latter. And in fact I have always observed, that a Rake who is a Minute Philosopher, when grown old becomes a sharper in business. LYS. I cou'd name you several such who have grown most noted Patriots. CRI. Patriots! such Patriots as Catiline and Marc Antony. LYS. And what then? Those famous Romans were brave though unsuccessful. They wanted neither Sense nor Courage, and if their Schemes had taken effect, the brisker part of their Countrymen had been much the better for them.

XXI. The wheels of Government go on, though wound up by different hands; if not in the same form, yet in some other, perhaps a better. There is an endless variety in nature, weak Men, indeed. are prejudiced towards Rules and Systems in Life and Government; and think if these are gone all is gone: But a Man of a great Soul and free Spirit delights in the noble experiment of blowing up Systems and dissolving Governments, to mould them anew upon other principles and in another shape. Take my word for it; there is a plastic nature in things that feeks its own end. Pull a State to pieces, jumble, confound, and shake together the particles of Humane Society, and then let them stand a while, and you shall soon see them fettle of themselves in some convenient order, where heavy heads are lowest and Men of genius uppermost. EUPH. Lysicles, speaks his mind freely. LYS. Where was the advantage of Freethinking if it were not attended with Free-speaking, or of Free-speaking if it did not produce Freeacting? We are for absolute, independent, original freedom in thought, word, and deed. Inward freedom without outward, is good for nothing but to fet a Man's judgment at variance with his practice. QRI. This free way of Lyfieles may feem new to you; it is not fo to me. As the Minute Philiophers lay it down for a maxim, that there is nothing facred of any kind, nothing but what may be made a jest of, exploded, and changed like the fashion of their Clothes, so nothing is more frequent than for them to utter their schemes and principles, not only in felect Companies, but even in public. In a certain part of the World, where ingenious Men are wont to retail their Speculations, I remember to have feen a Valetudinarian in a long Wig and Cloak fitting at the upper end of a Table, with half a dozen of Disciples about him. After he had talked about Religion in a manner, and with an air that wou'd make one think, Atheism established by Law, and Religion only tolerated, he entered upon Civil Government, and observed to his Audience, that the natural World was in a perpetual circulation: Animals, faid he, who draw their fustenance from the Earth, mix with that fame Earth, and in their turn become Food for Vegetables, which again nourish the Animal kind: The Vapours that afcend from this Globe descend back upon it in showers: The Elements alternately prey upon each other: That which one part of nature loseth another gains, the fum total remaining always the same, being neither bigger nor lesser, better nor worfe for all these intestine changes. Even so, faid this learned Professor, the revolutions in the civil World are no detriment to Human Kind, one part whereof rifes as the other falls, and wins by another's lofs. A Man therefore who thinks deeply, and hath an eye on the whole System, is no more a Bigot to Government than to Religion. He knows how to fuit himself to occasions, and make the best of every event: For the rest, he looks on all translations of power and property. from

from one hand to another with a philosophic indifference. Our Lecturer concluded his discourse with a most ingenious Analysis of all political and moral Virtues into their first principles and causes, shewing them to be meer fashions, tricks of State, and illusions on the Vulgar. LYS. We have been often told of the good effects of Religion and Learning, Churches and Universities: But I dare affirm, that a dozen or two ingenious Men of our Sect have done more towards advancing real knowledge, by extemporaneous Lectures in the compass of a few years, than all the Ecclesiastics put together for as many Centuries. EUPH. And the Nation no doubt thrives accordingly: But, it feems, Crito, you have heard them discourse. CRI. Upon hearing this and other Lectures of the fame tendency, methought it was needless to establish Professors for the Minute Philosophy in either University, while there are so many spontaneous Lecturers in every corner of the Streets, ready to open Mens Eyes, and rub off their prejudices about Religion, Loyalty, and public Spirit. LYS. If wishing was to any purpose, I cou'd wish for a Telescope that might draw into my view things future in time, as well as distant in place. Oh! that I cou'd but look into the next age, and behold what it is that we are preparing to be, the glorious harvest of our Principles, the spreading of which hath produced a visible tendency, in the Nation towards fomething great and new. CRI. One thing I dare fay you wou'd expect to fee, be the changes and agitations of the Public what they will, that is, every Free-thinker upon his legs-You are all Sons of Nature, who chearfully follow the fortunes of the common Mass. And it must be owned we have a maxim, that each shou'd take care of one. CRI. Alas, Lysicles, you wrong your own Character. You wou'd fain pass F 2 upon

upon the World and upon yourselves for interested cunning Men: But can any thing be more disinterested than to sacrifice all regards to the abstracted Speculation of Truth? Or can any thing be more void of all cunning than to publish your discoveries to the World, teach others to play the whole game, and arm Mankind against yourselves?

XXII. If a Man may venture to suggest so mean a thought as the love of their Country, to Souls fired with the love of Truth, and the love of Liberty, and grasping the whole extent of Nature, I wou'd humbly propose it to you, Gentlemen, to observe the caution practifed by all other discoverers, projectors, and makers of experiments, who never hazard all on the first trial. Wou'd it not be prudent to try the fuccess of your principles on a small model in some remote corner? For instance to set up a Colony of Atheists in Monomotapa, and fee how it prospers before you proceed any further at home: Half a dozen Ship-load of Minute Philosophers might easily be spared upon fo good a defign. In the mean time, you Gentlemen, who have found out that there is nothing to be hoped or feared in another Life, that Conscience is a Bugbear, that the bands of Government, and the cement of Human Society are rotten things, to be diffolved and crumbled into nothing, by the argumentation of every Minute Philosopher, be so good as to keep these sublime discoveries to yourselves: Suffer us, our Wives, our Children, our Servants and our Neighbours to continue in the Belief and way of Thinking established by the Laws of our Country. In good earnest, I wish you wou'd go try your experiments among the Hottentots or Turks. LYS. The Hottentots we think well of, believing them to be an unprejudiced People; but it is to be feared their diet and customs wou'd not agree with our Philosophers

As for the Turks they are Bigots who have a notion of God and a respect for Jesus Christ. I queflion whether it might be fafe to venture among them. CR I. Make your experiment then in some other part of Christendom. LYS. We hold all other Christian Nations to be much under the power of prejudice; even our Neighbours the Dutch are too much prejudiced in favour of their Religion by Law established, for a prudent Man to attempt innovations under their Government. Upon the whole it feems, we can execute our Schemes no where with fo much fecurity and fuch prospect of fuccess as at home. Not to say that we have already made a good progress. Oh! That we cou'd but once fee a Parliament of true, staunch, libertine Free-thinkers! CRI. God forbid. be forry to have fuch Men for my Servants, not to fay, for my Masters. LYS. In that we differ.

XXIII. But you will agree with me that the right way to come at this, was to begin with extirpating the prejudices of particular Persons. We have carried on this work for many years with much art and industry, and at first with secrecy, working like Moles under ground, concealing our progress from the Public, and our ultimate views from many, even of our own Proselytes, blowing the Coals between polemical Divines, laying hold on and improving every incident, which the passions and folly of Churchmen afforded, to the advantage of our Sect, As our principles obtained, we still proceeded to farther inferences; and as our numbers multiplied, we gradually disclosed ourselves and our Opinions; where we are now I need not fay. We have stubbed and weeded and cleared Humane Nature to that degree, that in a little time, leaving it alone without any labouring or teaching, you shall fee natural and just Ideas sprout forth of themselves. CRI. But I have F 3 heard

heard a man, who had lived long and observed much, remark that the worst and most unwholefome weed was this fame Minute Philosophy. We have had, faid he, divers epidemical distempers in the State, but this hath produced of all others the most destructive Plague. Enthusiasm had its day, its effects were violent and foon over: This infects more quietly but spreads widely: The former bred a fever in the State, this breeds a confumption and final decay. A Rebellion or an Invasion alarms and puts the Public upon its defence, but a corruption of principles work its ruin more flowly perhaps, but more furely. This may be illustrated by a Fable I somewhere met with in the writings of a Swiss Philosopher, setting forth the original of Brandy and Gun-powder. The Government of the North being once upon a time vacant, the Prince of the power of the air convened a Council in Hell, wherein upon competition between two Dæmons of rank, it was determined they shou'd both make trial of their abilities, and he shou'd succeed who did most mischief. One made his appearance in shape of Gunpowder. the other in that of Brandy: The former was a declared Enemy and roared with a terrible noise, which made folks afraid, and put them on their guard: The other passed as a Friend and a Physician through the World, disguised himself with Sweets and Perfumes and Drugs, made his way into the Ladies Cabinets, and the Apothecaries Shops, and under the notion of helping digeftion, comforting the Spirits, and cheering the Heart, produced direct contrary effects; and having in: fenfibly thrown great numbers of Humane Kind into a lingring but fatal decay, was found to people Hell and the Grave fo fast as to merit the Government which he still possesses.

XXIV. LYS. Those who please may amuse themselves

themselves with Fables and Allegories. This is plain English: Liberty is a good thing, and we are the support of Liberty. CRI. To me it seems that Liberty and Virtue were made for each other. If any Man wish to enslave his Country, nothing is a fitter preparative than Vice; and nothing leads to Vice as furely as Irreligion. For my part I cannot comprehend or find out, after having confidered it in all lights, how this crying down Religion shou'd be the effect of honest views towards a just and legal Liberty. Some seem to propose an indulgence in Vice. Others may have in prospect the advantages which needy and ambitious Men are used to make in the ruin of a State: One may indulge a pert petulant Spirit; another hope to be esteemed among Libertines, when he wants wit to please or abilities to be useful. But, be Mens views what they will, let us examine what good your principles have done; who has been the better for the instructions of these Minute Philosophers? Let us compare what we are in respect of Learning, Loyalty, Honesty, Wealth, Power and Public Spirit with what we have been. Freethinking (as it is called) hath wonderfully grown of late years. Let us fee what hath grown up with it, or what effects it hath produced. To make a catalogue of ills is difagreeable; and the only bleffing it can pretend to is Luxury: That fame bleffing which revenged the World upon old Rome: That fame Luxury that makes a Nation like a diseased pampered body, look full and fat with one foot in the Grave. LYS. You mistake the matter. There are no People who think and argue better about the public good of a State than our Sect; who have also invented many things tending to that end, which we cannot as yet conveniently put in practice. CRI. But one point there is from which it must be owned the Public F 4

hath already received some advantage, which is the effect of your principles flowing from them, and spreading as they do; I mean that old Roman practice of Self-morder which at once puts an end to all distress, ridding the World and themselves of the miserable. LYS. You were pleased before to make some reflections on this Custom, and laugh at the irrefolution of our Free-thinkers: But I can aver for matter of fact, that they have often recommended it by their example as well as arguments, and that it is folely owing to them that a practice, so useful and magnanimous, hath been taken out of the hands of Lunatics, and restored to that credit among Men of fense, which it anciently had. In whatever light you may confider it, this is in fact a folid Benefit: But the best effect of our principles is that light and truth fo visibly fhed abroad in the World. From how many prejudices, errors, perplexities and contradictions have we freed the minds of our Fellow-Subjects? How many hard words and intricate abfurd notions had possessed the minds of Men before our Philofophers appeared in the World? But now even Women and Children have right and found notions of things. What fay you to this, Crito? CRI. I fay, with respect to these great advantages of destroying Men and Notions, that I question whother the Public gains as much by the latter as it lofeth by the former. For my own part I had rather my Wife and Children all believed what they had no notion of and daily pronounced words without a meaning, than that any one of them shou'd cut his Throat, or leap out of a Window. Errors and nonsense as such are of small concern in the eye of the Public, which consider not the metaphysical Truth of notions, fo much as the Tendency they have to produce good or evil. Truth it felf is valued by the Public, as it hath an influence, and is

account

felt in the course of Life. You may confute a whole shelf of Schoolmen, and discover many speculative Truths without any great merit towards your Country. But if I am not mistaken, the Minute Philosophers are not the Men to whom we are most beholden for discoveries of that kind: This I fay must be allowed supposing, what I by no means grant, your notions to be true. For, to fay plainly what I think, the tendency of your Opinions is fo bad, that no good Man can endure them, and your arguments for them fo weak, that no wife Man will admit them. LYS. Has it not been proved as clear as the Meridian Sun, that the politer fort of Men lead much happier lives, and fwim in pleasure since the spreading of our Principles? But, not to repeat or infift further on what has been so amply deduced, I shall only add that the advantages flowing from them, extend to the tenderest Age and the foster Sex: Our principles deliver Children from terrors by night, and Ladies from splenetic hours by day. Instead of these old fashioned things, Prayers and the Bible, the grateful amusements of Drams, Dice, and Billetsdoux have succeeded. The fair Sex have now nothing to do but dress and paint, drink and game, adorn divert themselves, and enter into all the sweet Seciety of Life. CRI. I thought, Lysicles, the argument from pleasure had been exhausted; but fince you have not done with that point, let us once more by Euphranor's rule cast up the account of pleasure and pain, as credit and debt under distinct Articles. We will fet down in the life of your fine Lady, rich clothes, dice, cordials, scandal, late hours against vapours, distaste, remorfe, losses at play, and the terrible diffress of ill spent age increasing every day: suppose no cruel accident of jealousy, no madness or infamy of love, yet at the foot of the

account you shall find that empty, giddy, gaudy, fluttering thing, not half so happy as a butterfly, or a grashopper on a Summer's day: And for a Rake or Man of pleasure, the reckoning will be much the same, if you place liftlesness, ignorance, rottenness, loathing, craving, quarrelling, and fuch qualities or accomplishments over against his little circle of fleeting amusements, long woe against momentary pleasure; and if it be considered that, when Sense and Appetite go off, though he feek refuge from his Confcience in the Minute Philosophy, yet in this you will find, if you fift him to the bottom, that he affects much, believes little, knows nothing. Upon which Lyficles turning to me, observed, that Crito might dispute against fact if he pleased, but that every one must see the Nation was the merrier for their principles. True, answered Crito, we are a merry Nation indeed: Young Men laugh at the old; Children despite their Parents; and Subjects make a jest of the Government; happy effects of the Minute Philosophy!

XXV. LYS. Infer what effects you please that will not make our principles less true. CRI. Their truth is not what I am now confidering. point at present is the usefulness of your principles; and to decide this point we need only take a short view of them fairly proposed and laid together; That there is no God or Providence; that Man is as the Beafts that perish; that his Happiness as theirs confifts in obeying animal inflincts, appetites and passions; that all stings of conscience and fense of guilt are prejudices and errors of Education; that Religion is a State trick; that Vice is beneficial to the Public; that the Soul of Man is corporeal and dissolveth like a slame or vapour; that Man is a Machine actuated according to the Laws of motion; and confequently he is no agent

or fubject of guilt; that a wife Man will make his own particular individual interest in this present life, the rule and measure of all his actions: These and fuch Opinions are, it feems, the Tenets of a Minute Philosopher, who is himself according to his own principles an Organ play'd on by fenfible objects, a Ball bandied about by appetites, and passions; so subtle is he as to be able to maintain all this by artful reasonings; so sharp-fighted and penetrating to the very bottom of things as to find out, that the most interested occult cunning is the only true wisdom. To contemplate his Character, this curious piece of Clockwork, having no principle of Action within it felf, and denying that it hath or can have any one Free Thought or Motion, fets up for the Patron of Liberty, and earnestly contends for Free-thinking. Crito had no fooner made an end, but Lysicles addressing himself to Euphranor and me; Crito, faid he, has taken a world of pains, but convinced me only of one fingle point, to wit. That I must despair of Convincing him. Never did I in the whole course of my life meet with a Man fo deeply immerfed in Prejudice; let who will pull him out for me. But I entertain better hopes of you. I can answer, faid I, for my felf, that my eyes and ears are always open to Conviction: I am attentive to all that passes, and upon the whole shall form, whether right or wrong, a very impartial judgment. Crito, said Euphranor, is a more enterprising Man than I, thus to rate and lecture a Philosopher. For my part, I always find it easier to learn than to teach. I shall therefore beg your affistance to rid me of some scruples about the tendency of your Opinions; which I find my felf unable to master, though never fo willing. This done, though we shou'd not tread exactly in the same steps, nor perhaps go the fame road; yet we shall not run in all points diametrically opposite one to another.

XXIV. Tell me now, Lysicles, you who are a minute observer of things, whether a shade be more agreeable at morning or evening or noon-day. LYS. Doubtless at noon-day. EUPH. And what dispofeth Men to rest? LYS. Exercise. EUPH. When do Men make the greatest fires? LYS. In the coldest weather. EUPH. And what creates a love for icid Liquors? LYS. Excessive heat. EUPH. What if you raise a Pendulum to a great height on one fide? LYS. It will, when left to it felf, afcend fo much the higher on the other. EUPH. It shou'd feem, therefore, that Darkness ensues from Light, Rest from Motion, Heat from Cold, and in general that one Extreme is the confequence of another. LYS. It shou'd seem so. EUPH. And doth not this observation hold in the civil as well as natural World? Doth not Power produce Licence. and Licence Power? Do not Whigs make Tories, and Tories Whigs? Bigots make Atheists and Atheists Bigots? LYS. Granting this to be true. EUPH. Will it not hence follow, that as we abhor Slavin Principles, we shou'd avoid running into Licentious ones? I am and always was a fincere lover of Liberty, Legal English Liberty; which I efteem a chief bleffing, ornament, and comfort of Life, and the great Prerogative of an Englishman. But is it not to be feared, that upon the Nation's running into a Licentiousness which hath never been endured in any civilized Country, Men feeling the intolerable evils of one extreme may naturally fall into the other? You must allow, the bulk of Mankind are not Philosophers like you and Alcipbron. LYS. This I readily acknowledge. EUPH. I have another fcruple about the tendency of your Opinions. Suppose you shou'd prevail and destroy this Protestant Church and Clergy: How cou'd

cou'd you come at the Popish? I am credibly informed there is a great number of Emissaries of the Church of Rome disguised in England: who can tell what harvest a Clergy so numerous, so subtle, and fo well furnished with arguments to work on vulgar and uneducated minds, may be able to make in a Country despoiled of all Religion, and feeling the want of it? Who can tell whether the Spirit of Free-thinking ending with the Opposition, and the Vanity with the Distinction, when the whole Nation are alike Infidels, who can tell, I fay, whether in fuch a juncture the Men of Genius themselves may not effect a new Distinction, and be the first converts to Popery? LYS. And suppose they shou'd. Between friends it wou'd be no great These are our maxims. In the first place matter. we hold it wou'd be best to have no Religion at Secondly, we hold that all Religions are indifferent. If therefore upon trial we find the Country cannot do without a Religion, why not Popery as well as another? I know feveral ingenious Men of our Sect, who, if we had a Popish Prince on the Throne, wou'd turn Papifts to-morrow. This is a Paradox, but I shall explain it. A Prince whom we compliment with our Religion. to be fure must be grateful. EUPH. I understand you. But what becomes of Free-thinking all the while? LYS. Oh! we shou'd have more than ever of that, for we shou'd keep it all to ourselves. for the amusement of retailing it, the want of this wou'd be largely compensated by folid advantages of another kind. EUPH. It feems then, by this account, the Tendency you observed in the Nation towards fomething great and New proves 2 Tendency towards Popery and Slavery. Mistake us not, good Eupbranor. The thing first in our intention is Confummate Liberty: But if this will not do, and there must after all be such things

things tolerated as Religion and Government, we are wifely willing to make the best of both. CRI. This puts me in mind of a thought I have often had, That Minute Philosophers are Dupes of the The two most avowed, professed, busy, propagators of Infidelity in all companies, and upon all occasions, that I ever met with were both Bigotted Papists, and being both Men of considerable estates, suffered considerably on that score; which, it is wonderful their Thinking Disciples shou'd never reflect upon. Hegemon, a most distinguished Writer among the Minute Philosophers, and Hero of the Sect, I am well affured, was once a Papist, and never heard that he professed any other Religion. I know that many of the Church of Rome abroad, are pleased with the growth of Infidelity among us, as hoping it may make way for them. The Emissaries of Rome are known to have personated several other Sects, which from time to time have fprung up amongst us, and why not this of the Minute Philosophers, of all others the best calculated to ruin both Church and State? I my felf have known a Jesuit abroad talk among English Gentlemen like a Free-thinker. I am credibly informed, that Jesuits, known to be such by the Minute Philosophers at home, are admitted into their Clubs: And I have observed them to approve, and speak better of the Jesuits, than of any other Clergy whatfoever. Those who are not acquainted with the fubtle Spirit, the refined Politics, and wonderful Oeconomy of that renowned Society, need only read the account given of them by the Jesuit Inchofer, in his Book De Monarchia Solipforum; and those who are, will not be surprised they shou'd be able to make Dupes of our Minute Philosophers: Dupes, I say, for I can never think they suspect they are only tools to serve the ends of cunninger Men than themselves. They seem to me drunk

drunk and giddy with a false notion of Liberty, and fpur'd on by this principle to make mad Experiments on their Country, they agree only in pulling down all that stands in their way; without any concerted Scheme, and without caring or knowing what to erect in its flead. To hear them, as I have often done, descant on the moral Virtues. resolve them into Shame, then laugh at Shame as a weakness, admire the unconfined lives of Savages, despise all order and decency of Education. one wou'd think the intention of these Philosophers was, when they had pruned and weeded the notions of their fellow-subjects, and divested them of their Prejudices, to strip them of their Clothes, and fill the country with naked Followers of Nature, enjoying all the Privileges of Brutality. Here Crits made a pause, and fixed his eyes on Alcipbron, who during this whole conversation had fate thoughtful and attentive, without faying a word, and with an air, one while diffatisfied at what Lyficles advanced. another, ferene and pleafed, feeming to approve some better thought of his own. But the day being now far spent, Alcipbron proposed to adjourn the Argument till the following; when, faid he, I shall fet matters on a new Foundation, and in fo full and clear a Light, as, I doubt not, will give intire Satisfaction. So we changed the discourse. and after a repast upon cold provisions, took a walk on the Strand, and in the cool of the evening returned to Crito's.

HEARDENFACEDATEDOLATION

The THIRD DIALOGUE.

I. Alciphron's Account of Honour. II. Character and Conduct of Men of Honour. III. Sense of moral Beauty.

Beauty. IV. The Honestum or το καλον of the Ancients. V. Taste for moral Beauty, whether a sure Guide or Rule. VI. Minute Philosophers ravished with the abstract Beauty of Virtue. VII. Their Virtue alone disinterested and heroic. VIII. Beauty of sensible Objects, what, and how perceived? IX. The Idea of Beauty explained by Painting and Architecture. X. Beauty of the moral System; wherein it consists. XI. It supposeth a Providence. XII. Instruence of το καλον and το πρέπου. XIII. Enthusiasm of Cratylus compared with the Sentiments of Aristotle. XIV. Compared with the Stoical Principles. XV. Minute Philosophers, their Talent for Raillery and Ridicule. XVI. The Wisdom of those who make Virtue alone its own Reward.

THE following day as we fate round the Tea-table, in a Summer-Parlour which looks into the Garden, Alcipbron after the first dish turned down his cup, and reclining back in his Chair proceeded as follows. Above all the Sects upon earth it is the peculiar Privilege of ours, not to be tied down by any Principles. While other Philosophers profess a servile adherence to certain Tenets, ours affert a noble freedom, differing not only one from another, but very often the fame Man from himself. Which method of proceeding, beside other advantages, hath this annexed to it, that we are of all Men the hardest to confute. You may, perhaps, confute a particular Tenet, but then this affects only him who maintains it, and fo long only as he maintains it. Some of our Sect dogmatize more than others, and in some more than other points. The Doctrine of the ufefulness of Vice is a point wherein we are not all agreed. Some of us are great admirers of Virtue. With others the points of Vice and Virtue are problematical. For my own part, though I think the Doctrine

tion

Doctrine maintained yesterday by Lysicles an ingenious speculation; yet, upon the whole, there are divers Reasons which incline me to depart from it, and rather to espouse the Virtuous side of the question; with the smallest, perhaps, but the most contemplative and laudable part of our Sect. It feemeth I fay, after a nice inquiry and balancing on both fides, that we ought to prefer Virtue to Vice: and that fuch preference wou'd contribute both to the public Weal, and the reputation of our Philosophers. You are to know then, we have among us feveral that, without one grain of Religion, are Men of the nicest Honour, and therefore Men of Virtue because Men of Honour. Honour is a noble unpolluted Source of Virtue, without the least mixture of Fear, Interest or Superstition. It hath all the advantages without the evils which attend Religion. It is the mark of a great and fine foul, and is to be found among Persons of Rank and Breeding. It affects the Court, the Senate, and the Camp, and in general every Rendezvous of people of fashion. EUPH. You say then that honour is the Source of Virtue. ALC. I do. EUPH. Can a thing be the fource of it felf? ALC. It cannot. EUPH. The Source, therefore, is distinguished from that of which it is the Source. ALC. Doubtless. EUPH. Honour then is one thing and Virtue another. ALC, I grant it. Virtuous actions are the effect, and Honour is the Source or Caufe of that effect. EUPH. Tell me. Is Honour the Will producing those actions, or the final Cause for which they are produced, or right Reason which is their rule and limit, or the Object about which they are conversant? Or do you by the word Honour understand a Faculty or Appetite? All which are supposed, in one sense or other, to be the Source of humane actions. ALC. Nothing of all this. EUPH. Be pleased then to give me some no-

H

tion or definition of it. Alcipbron having mused a while answered, that he defined Honour to be a Principle of virtuous Actions. To which Eupbranor replied; if I understand it rightly the word Principle is variously taken. Sometimes by Principles we mean the parts of which a whole is composed, and into which it may be resolved. Thus the Elements are faid to be principles of compound bodies. And thus words, syllables, and letters are the principles of Speech. Sometimes by Principle we mean a small particular feed, the growth or gradual unfolding of which doth produce an Organiz'd Body, animal or vegetable, in its proper fize and shape. Principles at other times are supposed to be certain fundamental Theorems in Arts and Sciences, in Religion and Politics. Let me know in which of these senses, or whether it be in fome other Sense that you understand this word, when you fay, Honour is a Principle of Virtue, To this Alcipbron replied, that for his part he meant it in none of those senses, but defined Honour to be a certain Ardour or Enthusiasm that glowed in the breast of a gallant Man. Upon this. Eupbranor observed, it was always admitted to put the Definition in place of the thing defined. Is this allowed, faid he, or not? ALC. It is. EUPH. May we not therefore fay, that a Man of Honour is a warm Man, or an Enthusiast? Alcipbron hearing this declared that fuch exactness was to no purpose; that Pedants, indeed, may dispute and define, but cou'd never reach that high fense of Honour, which distinguished the fine Gentleman, and was a thing rather to be felt than explained.

II. Crito, perceiving that Alcipbron cou'd not bear being pressed any farther on that article, and willing to give some satisfaction to Euphranor, said that of himself indeed he should not undertake to explain so nice a point, but he wou'd retail to them

Dial. III. PHILOSOPHER. 103 part of a conversation he once heard between Nicander a Minute Philosopher and Menecles a Christian, upon the same subject, which was for substance as follows. M. From what principle are you Gentlemen virtuous? N. From Honour. We are Men of Honour. M. May not a Man of Honour debauch another's wife, or get drunk, or fell a vote, or refuse to pay his debts, without lessening or tainting his Honour? N. He may have the vices and faults of a Gentleman: But is obliged to pay debts of Honour, that is, all fuch as are contracted by Play. M. Is not your Man of Honour always ready to refent Affronts and engage in Duels? N. He is ready to demand and give Gentleman's fatisfaction upon all proper occasions. M. It shou'd seem by this account, that to Ruin tradesmen. Break faith to one's own wife, Corrupt another Man's, Take bribes, Cheat the Public, Cut a Man's throat for a word, are all points confiftent with your principle of Honour. N. It cannot be denied that we are Men of gallantry, Men of fire, Men who know the world, and all that. M. It feems therefore that Honour among Infidels is like Honesty among Pirates: fomething confined to themselves, and which the Fraternity perhaps may find their account in, but every one else shou'd be constantly on his guard against. By this Dialogue, continued Crito, a Man, who lives out of the grand Monde, may be enabled to form some notion of what the world calls Honour and men of Honour. EUPH. I must intreat you not to put me off with Nicander's opinion, whom I know nothing of, but rather give me your own observation upon Men of Honour. CRI. If I must pronounce, I can very fincerely affure you that by all I have heard or feen, I cou'd never find, that Honour, considered as a principle distinct from Conscience, Religion, Reafon, and Virtue, was more than an empty name,

H 2

And

And I do verily believe, that those who build upon that notion have less Virtue than other Men, and that what they have or feem to have is owing to Fashion, (being of the reputable kind) if not a conscience early imbued with religious principles, and afterwards retaining a tincture from them without knowing it. These two principles feem to account for all that looks like Virtue in those Gentlemen. Your Men of Fashion in whom animal life abounds, a fort of Bullies in Morality, who didain to have it thought they are afraid of Conscience; these descant much upon Honour, and affect to be called Men of Honour, rather than conscientious or Honest Men. But, by all De that I cou'd ever observe, this specious Character, where there is nothing of Conscience or Religion underneath to give it life and substance, is no better than a meteor or painted cloud. EUPH. I had a confused notion that Honour was something nearly connected with truth, and that Men of Honour were the greatest enemies to all Hypocrify, Fallacy, and Difguise. CRI. So far from that, an Infidel who fets up for the nicest Honour shall, without the least grain of Faith or Religion, pretend himself a Christian, take any test, join in any act of worship, kneel, pray, receive the Sacrament to serve an interest. The same person, without any impeachment of his Honour, shall most folemnly declare and promise in the face of God and the World, that he will love his Wife, and forfaking all others keep only to her, when at the fame time it is certain, he intends never to perform one tittle of his vow: and convinceth the whole world of this as foon as he gets her in his power, and her fortune, for the fake of which this Man of untainted Honour makes no scruple to cheat and lye. EUPH. We have a notion here in the Country, that it was of all things most odious.

odious, and a matter of much risque and hazard, to give the Lye to a Man of Honour. CRI. It is very true. He abhors to take the Lye but not to tell it.

III. Alcipbron, having heard all this with great composure of mind and countenance, spake as follows. You are not to think, that our greatest strength lies in our greatest Number, Libertines and meer Men of Honour. No: we have among us Philosophers of a very different character, Men of curious contemplation, not governed by such gross things as Sense and Custom, but of an abstracted Virtue and sublime Morals: and the less religious the more virtuous. For Virtue of the highest and most disinterested kind no Man is so well qualified as an Infidel, it being a mean and felfish thing to be virtuous through fear or hope. The notion of a Providence and future State of Rewards and Punishments, may indeed tempt or scare Men of abject spirit into practices contrary to the natural bent of their Souls, but will never produce a true and genuine Virtue. To go to the bottom of things, to analyse Virtue into its first principles, and fix a scheme of Duty on its true basis, you must understand, that there is an idea of Beauty natural to the mind of Man. This all Men desire, this they are pleased and delighted with for their own fake, purely from an Instinct of Nature. A Man needs no arguments to make him discern and approve what is beautiful; it strikes at first fight and attracts without a reason. And as this Beauty is found in the shape and form of corporeal things; so also is there analogous to it a Beauty of another kind, an order a symmetry, and comeliness in the moral world. And as the Eye perceiveth the one, so the Mind doth by a certain interior fense perceive the other, which sense, talent, or faculty is ever quickest and purest in the H 3

Thus as by fight I difcern the noblest Minds. Beauty of a Plant or Animal, even fo the mind apprehends the moral Excellence, the Beauty, and Decorum of Justice and Temperance. And as we readily pronounce a Dress becoming or an Attitude graceful, we can, with the same free untutored judgment, at once declare, whether this or that Conduct or Action be comely and beautiful. To relish this kind of Beauty, there must be a delicate and fine Taste: But where there is this natural Taste, nothing further is wanting, either as a principle to convince, or as a motive to induce Men to the love of Virtue. And more or less there is of this Taste or Sense in every creature that hath Reason. All Rational Beings are by nature focial. They are drawn one towards another by natural affections: they unite and incorporate into families, clubs, parties and commonwealths by mutual Sympathy. As by means of the fenfitive Soul, our several distinct parts and members do confent towards the animal Functions, and are connected in one Whole: even fo, the feveral parts of these Rational Systems or Bodies Politic, by virtue of this moral or interior Sense are held together, have a fellow-feeling, do fuccour and protect each other, and jointly co-operate towards the same end. Hence that joy in Society, that propenfity towards doing good in our Kind, that gratulation and delight in beholding the virtuous deeds of other Men, or in reflecting on our By contemplation of the fitness and order of the parts of a moral System, regularly operating, and knit together by benevolent affections, the Mind of Man attaineth to the highest notion of Beauty, Excellence, and Perfection: Seized and rapt with this fublime idea, our Philosophers do infinitely despite and pity, whoever shall propose

or accept any other motive to Virtue, and Falfhood of every kind is inconfistent with the genuine spirit of Philosophy. CRI. The Love therefore that you bear to moral Beauty, and your paffion for abstracted Truth, will not suffer you to think with patience of those fraudulent Impositions upon Mankind, Providence, the Immortality of the Soul, and a future Retribution of rewards and punishments; which under the notion of prcmoting do, it feems, destroy all true Virtue, and at the same time contradict and disparage your noble Theories, manifestly tending to the perturbation and disquiet of Mens minds, and filling them with fruitless hopes and vain terrors. ALC. Mens first Thoughts and natural Notions are the best in moral matters. And there is no need, that Mankind shou'd be preached, or reasoned, or frightened into Virtue, a thing so natural and congenial to every Human Soul. Now if this be the case, as it certainly is, it follows that all the ends of Society are fecured without religion, and that an Infidel bids fair to be the most virtuous Man, in a true, fublime and heroic Sense.

IV. EUPH. O Alciphron, while you talk, I feel an affection in my foul like the trembling of one lute, upon striking the unison strings of another. Doubtless there is a beauty of the mind, a Charm in Virtue, a Symmetry and Proportion in the moral world. This moral Beauty was known to the ancients by the name of Honessum or τὸ καλὸν. And in order to know its force and instuence, it may not be amiss to enquire, what it was understood to be, and what light it was placed in by those who first considered it, and gave it a name:

τὸ καλὸν according to Aristotle is the ἐπαινετὸν, or laudable, according to Plato it is the ἡδὸ or ἀφέλιμον, pleasant or profitable, which is meant with respect of a reasonable mind, and its true interest.

H 4

Now

Now I wou'd fain know whether a mind, which confiders an action as laudable, be not carried beyond the bare action itself, to regard the opinion of others concerning it? ALC. It is. EUPH. And whether this be a fufficient ground or principle of Virtue, for a Man to act upon, when he thinks himself removed from the eye and observation of every other intelligent Being? ALC. It feems not. EUPH. Again, I ask whether a Man who doth a thing pleafant or profitable as fuch, might not be supposed to forbear doing it, or even to do the contrary, upon the prospect of great pleasure or profit? ALC. He might. EUPH. Doth it not follow from hence, that the Beauty of Virtue or to xadors in either Aristotle's or Plato's sense, is not a sufficient principle or ground, to engage fenfual and worldly-minded Men in the practice of it? ALC. What then? EUPH. Why then, it will follow that Hope of reward and Fear of punishment are highly expedient, to cast the balance of pleasant and profitable on the fide of virtue, and thereby very much conduce to the benefit of Human Society. Alciphron upon this appealed; Gentlemen, faid he, you are witnesses of this unfair proceeding of Euphranor, who argues against us, from explications given by Plato and Aristotle of the Beauty of Virtue, which are things we have nothing to fay to; the Philosophers of our Sect abstracting from all Praise, Pleasure and Interest, when they are enamoured and transported with that sublime Idea. I beg pardon, replied Euphranor, for supposing the Minute Philosophers of our days think like those ancient Sages. But you must tell me, Alcipbron, fince you do not think fit, to adopt the sense of Plato or Aristotle, what sense it is in which you understand the Beauty of Virtue? Define it, explain it, make me to understand your meaning, that fo we may argue about the

fame thing, without which we can never come to a conclusion.

V. ALC. Some things are better understood by definitions and descriptions, but I have always observed that those who wou'd define, explain, and dispute about this point, make the least of it. Moral Beauty is of fo peculiar and abstracted a nature, fomething fo fubtile, fine, and fugacious, that it will not bear being handled and inspected, like every gross and common subject. You will, therefore, pardon me, if I stand upon my Philosophic liberty; and choose rather to intrench my felf within the general and indefinite fense, rather than, by entering into a precise and particular explication of this Beauty, perchance lose fight of it, or give you some hold whereon to cavil, and infer, and raife doubts, queries, and difficulties about a point as clear as the Sun when no body reasons upon it. EUPH. How, fay you Alcipbron, is that notion clearest when it is not considered? ALC. I fay it is rather to be felt than understood, a certain je ne scay quoy. An object, not of the discurfive faculty, but of a peculiar fense which is properly called the moral fense, being adapted to the perception of moral Beauty, as the Eye to colours, or the Ear to founds. EUPH. That Men have certain instinctive Sensations or Passions from nature, which make them amiable and useful to each other, I am clearly convinced. Such are a Fellow-feeling with the diffressed, a Tenderness for our offspring, an Affection towards our friends, our neighbours, and our country, an Indignation against things base, cruel, or unjust, These Passions are implanted in the Human Soul, with feveral other fears and appetites, aversions and defires, fome of which are strongest and uppermost in one mind, others in another. Shou'd it not therefore feem a very uncertain guide in mo-

rals, for a Man to follow his passion or inward feeling? and wou'd not this rule infallibly lead different Men different ways, according to the prevalency of this or that appetite or passion? ALC. I do not deny it. EUPH. And will it not follow from hence, that Duty and Virtue are in a fairer way of being practifed, if Men are led by Reason and Judgment, balancing low and fenfual pleafures with those of a higher kind, comparing present losses with future gains, and the uneafiness and difgust of every Vice with the delightful practice of the opposite Virtue, and the pleasing reflexions and hopes which attend it? Or can there be a stronger motive to Virtue, than the shewing that confiedred in all its lights it is every Man's true interest?

VI. ALC. I tell you, Euphranor, we contemn the Virtue of that Man, who computes and deliberates, and must have a reason for being virtuous. The refined Moralists of our Sect are ravished and transported with the abstracted Beauty of Virtue. They disdain all forinsecal motives to it; and love Virtue only for Virtue's fake. Oh Rapture! Oh Enthusiasm! Oh the Quintessence of Beauty! Methinks I cou'd dwell for ever on this Contemplation: But rather than entertain my felf, I must endeavour to convince you. Make an experiment on the first Man you meet. Propose a villainous or unjust action. Take his first fense of the matter, and you shall find he detests it. He may, indeed, be afterwards misled by Arguments or overpowered by Temptation, but his original unpremeditated and genuine thoughts are just and orthodox. How can we account for this but by a moral fense, which, left to it felf, hath as quick and true a perception of the Beauty and Deformity of Human Actions, as the Eye hath of of Colours? EUPH. May not this be sufficiently accounted

accounted for, by Conscience, Affection, Passion, Education, Reason, Custom, Religion, which principles and habits, for what I know, may be what you metaphorically call a Moral Senfe. What I call a Moral fense is strictly, properly, and truly fuch, and in kind different from all those things you enumerate. It is what all men have though all may not observe it. Upon this Euphranor smiled and faid, Alcipbron has made discoveries where I least expected it. For, said he, in regard to every other point, I shou'd hope to learn from him, but for the knowledge of my felf, or the faculties and powers of my own mind, I shou'd have looked at home. And there I might have looked long enough, without finding this new talent, which even now after being tutored I cannot comprehend. For Alcipbron, I must needs fay, is too Sublime and Ænigmatical upon a point, which of all others ought to be most clearly understood. I have often heard that your deepest adepts and oldest professors in science are the obscurest. Lysicles is young and speaks plain. Wou'd he but favour us with his fense of this point, it might perhaps prove more upon a level with my apprehension.

VII. Lysicles shook his head, and in a grave and earnest manner addressed the Company. Gentlemen, said he, Alcipbron stands upon his own legs. I have no part in these refined notions he is at present engaged to defend. If I must subdue my passions, abstract, contemplate, be enamoured of Virtue; in a word, if I must be an Enthusiast, I owe so much deference to the laws of my Country, as to choose being an Enthusiast, in their way. Besides, it is better being so for some end than for none. This Doctrine hath all the solid inconveniencies, without the amusing hopes and prospects of the Christian. ALC. I never counted on

Lysicles for my Second in this point; which after all doth not need his affiftance or explication. All fubjects ought not to be treated in the same manner. The way of Definition and Division is dry and pedantic. Besides, the subject is sometimes too obscure, sometimes too simple for this method. One while we know too little of a point. another too much, to make it plainer by discourse. CRI. To hear Alcipbron talk, puts me in mind of that Ingenious Greek, who having wrapt a man's brother up in a cloak, asked him whether he knew that person? being ready, either by keeping on. or pulling off the cloak to confute his answer whatever it should be. For my part I believe, if matters were fairly stated, that rational fatisfaction, that peace of mind, that inward comfort, and confcientious joy, which a good Christian finds in good actions, wou'd not be found to fall short of all the Ecstafy, Rapture, and Enthusiasm supposed to be the effect of that high and undescribed principle. In earnest can any Ecstasy be higher, any Rapture more affecting than that which springs from the love of God and Man, from a Conscience void of offence, and an inward discharge of Duty, with the fecret delight, trust, and hope that attends it? ALC. O Euphranor, we Votaries of Truth do not envy, the groundless joys and mistaken hopes of a And, as for Conscience and rational Christian. Pleasure, how can we allow a Conscience without allowing a vindictive Providence? Or how can we suppose, the charm of Virtue consists in any pleafure, or benefit attending virtuous actions, without giving great advantages to the Christian Religion, which, it feems excites its believers to Vittue by the highest Interests and Pleasures in rever-Alas! shou'd we grant this, there wou'd be a door opened to all those rusty Declaimers upon the necessity and usefulness of the great points of Faith,

Faith, the Immortality of the Soul, a Future State, Rewards and Punishments, and the like exploded Conceits; which, according to our fystem and principles, may perhaps produce a low, popular, interested kind of Virtue, but must absolutely destroy and extinguish it in the sublime and heroic sense.

VIII. EUPH. What you now fay is very intelligible: I wish I understood your main principle as well. ALC. And are you then in earnest at a loss? Is it possible you shou'd have no notion of Beauty, or that having it you shou'd not know it to be amiable, amiable I fay, in it felf, and for it felf? EUPH. Pray tell me, Alcipbron, are all mankind agreed in the notion of a beauteous face? ALC. Beauty in Human Kind feems to be of a more mixt and various nature; forafmuch as the passions, sentiments, and qualities of the Soul being feen through and blending with the features, work differently on different minds, as the fympathy is more or less. But with regard to other things is there no fleady principle of Beauty? Is there upon earth a Human mind without the idea of order, harmony, and proportion? EUPH. O Alcipbron, it is my weakness that I am apt to be lost and bewildred in abstractions and generalities. but a particular thing is better fuited to my faculties. I find it easy to consider and keep in view the objects of fense, let us therefore try to discover what their Beauty is, or wherein it confifts: and fo by the help of these sensible things, as a scale or ladder, ascend to moral and intellectual Beauty. Be pleased then to inform me, what it is we call Beauty in the objects of sense? ALC. Every one knows Beauty is that which pleases. EUPH. There is then Beauty in the smell of a Rose, or the taste of an Apple. ALC. By no means. Beauty is, to speak properly, perceived only

Dial. III. PHILOSOPHER. 115
portioned. ALC. It feems to follow; but I am
not clear as to this point. EUPH. Let us fee if
there be any difficulty in it. Cou'd the Chair you

there be any difficulty in it. Cou'd the Chair you fit on, think you, be reckon'd well proportioned or handsom, if it had not such a height, breadth, wideness, and was not so far reclined as to afford a convenient seat? ALC. It cou'd not. EUPH. The Beauty therefore, or Symmetry of a Chair cannot be apprehended but by knowing its use, and comparing its figure with that use, which cannot be done by the Eye alone, but is the effect of Judgment. It is therefore, one thing to see an

Object, and another to discern its Beauty. ALC. I admit this to be true.

IX. EUPH. The Architects judge a Door to be of a beautiful Proportion, when its height is double of the breadth. But if you shou'd invert a wellproportion'd Door making its breadth become the height, and its height the breadth, the figure would still be the same, but without that Beauty in one Situation, which it had in another. What can be the cause of this, but that in the forementioned Supposition, the Door wou'd not yield a convenient entrance to Creatures of a Human Figure? But, if in any other part of the Universe, there shou'd be supposed rational animals of an inverted Stature, they must be supposed to invert the Rule for Proportion of Doors; and to them that wou'd appear beautiful, which to us was difagreeable. ALC. Against this I have no Objection. EUPH. Tell me, Alcipbron, is there not fomething truly decent and beautiful in Drefs? ALC. Doubtless there is. EUPH. Are any likelier to give us an Idea of this Beauty in Drefs, than Painters and Sculptors, whose proper business and study it is, to aim at graceful Representations? ALC. I believe not. EUPH. Let us then examine the Draperies of the great Masters

in these Arts: How, for instance, they use to clothe a Matron or a Man of Rank. Cast an eye on those Figures (faid he, pointing to some Prints after Raphael and Guido, that hung upon the Wall) what appearance, do you think, an English Courtier or Magistrate, with his Gotbic, succinct, plaited Garment, and his full-bottom'd Wig, or one of our Ladies in her unnatural Drefs pinched, and stiffened, and enlarged with Hoops and Whalebone and Buckram, must make, among those Figures fo decently clad in Draperies that fall into fuch a variety of natural, easy, and ample Folds, that appear with fo much dignity and fimplicity. that cover the Body without encumbering it, and adorn without altering the Shape? ALC. Truly I think they must make a very ridiculous appearance. EUFH. And what do you think this proceeds from? Whence is it that the Eastern Nations, the Greeks, and the Romans, naturally ran into the most becoming Dresses, while our Gothic Gentry, after fo many Centuries racking their Inventions, mending, and altering, and improving, and whirling, about in a perpetual rotation of Fashions, have never yet had the luck to stumble on any that was not abfurd and ridiculous? Is it not from hence, that instead of consulting Use, Reason, and Convenience, they abandon themfelves to irregular Fancy, the unnatural Parent of Monsters? Whereas the Ancients, considering the use and end of Dress, made it subservient to the Freedom, Ease, and Convenience of the Body, and, having no Notion of mending or changing the natural Shape, they aimed only at shewing it with decency and advantage. And, if this be fo, are we not to conclude that the Beauty of Drefs depends on its subserviency to certain Ends and Uses? ALC. This appears to be true. EUPH. This fubordinate relative nature of Beauty, perhaps Dial. III. PHILOSOPHER. 117
haps will be yet plainer, if we examine the respective Beauties of a Horse and a Pillar. Virgil's
Description of the former is,

Argutumque caput, brevis alvus, obefaque terga, Luxuriatque toris animosum pectus.

Now I wou'd fain know, whether the perfections and uses of a Horse may not be reduced to these three points, Courage, Strength, and Speed; and whether each of the Beauties enumerated doth not occasion, or betoken, one of these Perfections? After the same manner, if we inquire into the Parts and Proportions of a beautiful Pillar, we shall perhaps find them answer to this same Idea. Those who have considered the Theory of Architecture, tell us *, the Proportions of the three Grecian Orders were taken from the Human Body, as the most beautiful and perfect Production of Nature. Hence were derived those graceful Ideas of Columns, which had a Character of Strength without clumfiness, or of Delicacy without weakness. Those beautiful Proportions were, I fay, taken originally from Nature, which, in her Creatures, as hath been already observed, referreth them to some end, use, or design. The Gonfiezza also, or swelling, and the diminution of a Pillar, is it not in fuch proportion as to make it appear strong and light at the same time? In the fame manner must not the whole Entablature, with its Projections be so proportioned, as to seem great but not heavy, light but not little, inafmuch as a Deviation into either extreme wou'd thwart that reason and use of Things, wherein their Beauty is founded, and to which it is subordinate? The Entablature and all its Parts and Ornaments, Architrave, Freeze, Cornice, Triglyphs, Metopes,

Modiglions,

^{*} See the learned Patriarch of Aquileia's Commentary on Vitruvius, 1. 4. c. 1.

Modiglions, and the rest, have each an use or appearance of use, in giving firmness and union to the Building, in protecting it from the Weather, and casting off the Rain, in representing the Ends of Beams with their intervals, the production of Rafters, and fo forth. And if we confider the graceful Angles in Frontispieces, the Spaces between the Columns, or the Ornaments of their Capitels, shall we not find, that their Beauty rifeth from the appearance of Use, or the imitation of natural Things, whose Beauty is originally founded on the same Principle? which is, indeed, the grand distinction between Gracian and Gotbic Architecture, the latter being fantastical, and for the most part founded neither in Nature nor in Reason, in Necessity nor Use, the appearance of which accounts for all the Beauty, Grace, and Ornament of the other. CRI. What Eupbranor has faid confirms the Opinion I always entertained, that the Rules of Architecture were founded, as all other Arts which flourished among the Greeks, in Truth, and Nature, and good Sense. But the Ancients, who, from a thorough confideration of the Grounds and Principles of Art, formed their Idea of Beauty, did not always confine themselves strictly to the same Rules and Proportions: But, whenever the particular Distance, Position, Elevation, or Dimension of the Fabric or its Parts seemed to require it, made no scruple to depart from them, without deferting the original Principles of Beauty, which governed whatever Deviations they made. This latitude or licence might not, perhaps, be fafely trufted with most modern Architects, who in their bold Sallies feem to act without aim or defign, and to be governed by no Idea, no Reason or principle of Art, but pure Caprice, joined with a thorough contempt of that noble Simplicity of the Ancients, without

without which there can be no unity, gracefulnefs, or grandeur in their Works; which of confequence must serve only to disfigure and dishonour the Nation, being fo many Monuments to future Ages of the opulence and ill tafte of the prefent; which, it is to be feared, wou'd fucceed as wretchedly, and make as mad work in other Affairs, were Men to follow, instead of rules, precepts and models, their own taste and first thoughts of Beauty. ALC. I shou'd now, methinks, be glad to fee a little more diffinctly the use and tendency of this Digreffion upon Architecture. EUPH. Was not Beauty the very thing we inquired after? ALC. It was. EUPH. What think you Alcipbron, can the appearance of a thing please at this time, and in this place, which pleafed two thousand Years ago, and two thousand Miles off, without fome real principle of Beauty? ALC. It cannot. EUPH. And is not this the case with respect to a just piece of Architecture? ALC. No body denies it. EUPH. Architecture, the noble Offfpring of judgment and fancy, was gradually formed in the most polite and knowing Countries of Afia, Egypt, Greece, and Italy. It was cherished and esteemed by the most flourishing States, and most renowned Princes, who with vast expence improved and brought it to perfection. It feems, above all other Arts, peculiarly conversant about Order, Proportion and Symmetry. May it not therefore be supposed on all accounts, most likely to help us to some rational Notion of the je ne scay quoy in Beauty? And, in effect, have we not learned from this Digreffion, that as there is no Beauty without Proportion, fo Proportions are to be esteem'd just and true, only as they are relative to some certain use or end, their Aptitude and Subordination to which end is, at bottom, that which THE MINUTE Dial. III. which makes them please and charm? ALC. I admit all this to be true.

X. EUPH. According to this Doctrine, I wou'd fain know what Beauty can be found in a moral System, formed connected and governed by Chance, Fate, or any other blind unthinking Principle; forafmuch as without thought there can be no end or defign, and without an end there can be no use, and without use there is no aptitude or fitness of Proportion, from whence Beauty forings? ALC. May we not suppose a certain vital Principle of Beauty, Order, and Harmony diffused throughout the World, without supposing a Providence inspecting, punishing, and rewarding the moral Actions of Men? Without supposing the Immortality of the Soul, or a Life to come, in a word, without admitting any part of what is commonly called Faith, Worship, and Religion? CRI. Either you suppose this Principle intelligent, or not intelligent: If the latter, it is all one with Chance or Fate which was just now argued against: If the former, let me intreat Alcipbron to explain to me, wherein confists the Beauty of a moral System, with a supreme Intelligence at the head of it, which neither protects the innocent, punishes the wicked, nor rewards the virtuous? To suppose indeed a Society of rational Agents acting under the Eye of Providence, concurring in one defign to promote the common benefit of the whole, and conforming their Actions to the established Laws and Order of the Divine Parental Wisdom: Wherein each particular Agent shall not consider himself apart, but as the Member of a great City, whose Author and Founder is God: In which the Civil Laws are no other, than the Rules of Virtue, and the Duties of Religion: And where every one's true Interest is combined with his Duty: To suppose this wou'd be delightful:

on this Supposition a Man need be no Stoic or Knight-errant, to account for his Virtue. In such a System Vice is Madness, Cunning is Folly, Wisdom and Virtue are the same thing, where, notwithstanding all the crooked Paths and By-roads, the wayward Appetites and Inclinations of Men, fovereign Reason is sure to reform whatever seems amifs, to reduce that which is devious, make Araight that which is crooked, and in the last Act wind up the whole Plot, according to the exacteft Rules of Wisdom and Justice. In such a System or Society, governed by the wifest precepts, enforced by the highest rewards and encouragements, it is delightful to confider, how the regulation of Laws, the distribution of Good and Evil, the aim of moral Agents, do all conspire in due Subordination to promote the noblest End, to wit, the compleat Happiness or Well-being of the whole. In contemplating the Beauty of fuch a moral System, we may cry out with the Psalmist, Very excellent Things are spoken of thee, thou City of God.

XI. In a System of Spirits, subordinate to the Will, and under the Direction, of the Father of Spirits, governing them by Laws, and conducting them by Methods suitable to wife and good Ends, there will be great Beauty. But in an incoherent, fortuitous System governed by Chance, or in a blind System governed by Fate, or in any System where Providence doth not preside, how can Beauty be, which cannot be without order, which cannot be without defign? When a Man is conscious that his will is inwardly conformed to the Divine Will, producing Order and Harmony in the Universe, and conducting the whole by the Justest Methods to the best End: This gives a beautiful Idea. But on the other hand, a Confcioulnels of Virtue overlooked, neglected, diffressed by Men, and not regarded or rewarded by

I 3

God,

God, ill-used in this World, without Hope or Prospect of being better used in another, I wou'd fain know, where is the Pleasure of this Reflection, where is the Beauty of this Scene? Or how cou'd any Man, in his Senses, think the spreading fuch Notions the way to spread or propagate Virtue in the World? Is it not, I befeech you an ugly System in which you can suppose no Law and prove no Duty, wherein Men thrive by Wickedness and suffer by Virtue? Would it not be a disagreeable Sight to fee an honest Man peeled by Sharpers, to see virtuous Men injured and despised while Vice triumph'd? An Enthusiast may entertain himself with Visions and fine Talk about such a System; but when it comes to be considered by Men of cool Heads, and close Reason, I believe they will find no Beauty nor Perfection in it; nor will it appear, that such a moral System can posfibly come from the fame Hand, or be of a piece with the natural, throughout which there shines fo much Order, Harmony, and Proportion. ALC. Your Discourse serves to confirm me in my Opinion. You may remember, I declared, that touching this Beauty of Morality in the high Sense, a Man's first Thoughts are best; and that, if we pretend to examine, and inspect, and reason, we are in danger to lose fight of it. That in Fact there is such a thing cannot be doubted, when we consider that in these Days some of our Philosophers have a high Sense of Virtue, without the least Notion of Religion, a clear Proof of the Usefulness and Efficacy of our Principles!

XII. CRI. Not to dispute the Virtue of Minute Philosophers, we may venture to call its Cause in question, and make a doubt, whether it be an inexplicable Enthusiastic Notion of Moral Beauty, or rather, as to me it feems, what was already affigned by Euphranor, Complexion, Custom, and

Religious

Religious Education? But, allowing what Beauty you please to Virtue in an Irreligious System, it cannot be less in a Religious, unless you will suppose that her Charms diminish as her Dowry increafeth. The Truth is, a Believer hath all the Motives from the Beauty of Virtue in any fense whatfoever that an Unbeliever can possibly have, besides other Motives which an Unbeliever hath Hence it is plain, those of your Sect, who have Moral Virtue, owe it not to their peculiar Tenets, which serve only to lessen the Motives to Virtue. Those therefore, who are good, are less good, and those who are bad are more bad, than they wou'd have been were they Believers. EUPH. To me it feems, those heroic infidel Inamorato's of abstracted Beauty are much to be pitied, and much to be admired. Lyficles hearing this, faid with some Impatience; Gentlemen, You shall have my whole Thoughts upon this Point plain and frank. All that is faid about a Moral Senfe, or Moral Beauty, in any fignification, either of Alcipbron or Eupbranor, or any other, I take to be at bottom meer Bubble and Pretence. The zaxòr and the mpimor, the beautiful and decent, are Things outward, relative, and superficial, which have no Effect in the dark, but are specious Topics to discourse and expatiate upon, as some formal Pretenders of our Sect, though in other Points yery Orthodox, are used to do. But shou'd one of them get into Power, you wou'd find him no fuch Fool as Euphranor imagines. He wou'd foon shew he had found out, that the Love of one's Country is a Prejudice: That Mankind are Rogues and Hypocrites, and that it were Folly to facrifice one's felf for the fake of fuch: That all Regards center in this Life, and that, as this Life is to every Man his own Life, it clearly follows that Charity begins at Home. Benevolence to Mankind I 4

Mankind is perhaps pretended, but Benevolence to himself is practised by the Wise. The livelier fort of our Philosophers do not scruple to own these Maxims; and as for the graver, if they are true to their Principles, one may guess what they must think at the Bottom. CRI. Whatever may be the Effect of pure Theory upon certain select Spirits, of a peculiar Make, or in some other Parts of the World, I do verily think that in this Country of ours, Reason, Religion, Law, are all together little enough to fubdue the Outward to the Inner Man; and that it must argue a wrong Head and weak Judgment to suppose, that without them Men will be enamoured of the golden Mean. To which my Countrymen perhaps are less inclined than others, there being in the Make of an English Mind a certain Gloom and Eagerness, which carries to the sad Extreme; Religion to Fanaticism; Free-thinking to Atheism; Liberty to Rebellion: Nor shou'd we venture to be governed by Taste, even in Matters of less Confequence. The Beautiful in Drefs, Furniture, and Building, is, as Eupbranor hath observed, something real and well grounded: And yet our English do not find it out of themselves. What wretched Work do they and other Northern People make, when they follow their own Taste of Beauty in any of these Particulars, instead of acquiring the true, which is to be got from ancient Models and the Principles of Art, as in the Cafe of Virtue from great Models and Meditation, fo far as natural Means can go? But in no Cafe is it to be hoped, that To zandor will be the leading Idea of the many, who have quick Senses, strong Passions, and gross Intellects.

XIII. ALC. The fewer they are, the more ought we esteem and admire such Philosophers, whose Souls are touched and transported with this sublime

Idea. CRI. But then one might expect from such Philosophers, so much good Sense and Philanthropy, as to keep their Tenets to themselves, and confider their weak Brethren, who are more strongly affected by certain Senses and Notions of another kind, than that of the Beauty of pure difinterested Virtue. Cratylus, a Man prejudiced against the Christian Religion, of a crazy Constitution, of a Rank above most Mens Ambition, and a Fortune equal to his Rank, had little Capacity for fenfual Vices, or Temptation to dishonest ones. Cratylus having talked himself, or imagined that he had talked himself, into a Stoical Enthusiasm about the Beauty of Virtue, did, under the Pretence of making Men heroically virtuous, endeavour to destroy the Means of making them reasonably and humanly fo: A clear Instance, that neither Birth nor Books nor Conversation can introduce a Knowledge of the World into a conceited Mind, which will ever be its own Object, and contemplate Mankind in its own Mirrour? ALC. Cratylus was a Lover of Liberty, and of his Country, and had a mind to make Men incorrupt and virtuous, upon the purest and most disinterested Principles. CRI. His Conduct feems just as wife, as if a Monarch shou'd give out, that there was neither Jayl nor Executioner in his Kingdom to enforce the Laws, but that it wou'd be beautiful to observe them, and that in fo doing Men wou'd taste the pure Delight which refults from Order and Decorum. After all, is it not true that certain ancient Philofophers, of great Note, held the same Opinion with Cratylus, declaring that he did not come up to the Character, or deserve the Title of a good. Man, who practifed Virtue for the fake of any thing but its own Beauty? CRI. I believe, indeed, that some of the Ancients said such Things as gave Occasion

Occasion for this Opinion. Aristotle * distinguisheth between two Characters of a good Man, the one he calleth ayabos, or fimply good, the other καλός καγαθος, from whence the Compound Term καλοκαγάθία, which cannot, perhaps, be render'd by any one Word in our Language. But his Senfe is plainly this: ayabos he defineth to be that Man to whom the good Things of Nature are good; for, according to him, those Things, which are vulgarly esteemed the greatest Goods, as Riches, Honours, Power, and bodily Perfections, are indeed good by Nature, but they happen nevertheless to be hurtful and bad to some Persons, upon the account of evil Habits: Inafmuch as neither a Fool, nor an unjust Man, nor an Intemperate can be at all the better for the Use of them, any more than a fick Man for using the Nourishment proper for these who are in Health. But nands na yabos is that Man in whom are to be found all Things worthy decent and laudable, purely as such, and for their own fake, and who practifeth Virtue from no other Motive but the fole Love of her own innate Beauty. That Philosopher observes likewise, that there is a certain political Habit, fuch as the Spartans and others had, who thought Virtue was to be valued and practifed on account of the natural Advantages that attend it. For which Reason he adds, They are indeed good Men, but they have not the παλοκάγαθία, or supreme consummate Virtue. From hence it is plain that, according to Aristotle, a Man may be a good Man without believing Virtue its own Reward, or being only moved to Virtue by the Sense of Moral Beauty. It is also plain, that he distinguisheth the political Virtues of Nations, which the Publick is every where concerned to maintain, from this fublime and speculative kind. It might also be observed, that his exalted Idea

did confift with supposing a Providence which inspects and rewards the Virtues of the best Men. For faith he in another Place *, if the Gods have any Care of Human Affairs, as it appears they have, it shou'd seem reasonable to suppose, they are most delighted with the most excellent Nature, and most approaching their own, which is the Mind, and that they will reward those who chiefly love and cultivate what is most dear to them. The fame Philosopher observes +, that the Bulk of Mankind are not naturally disposed to be awed by Shame, but by Fear, nor to abstain from vicious Practices, on account of their Deformity, but only of the Punishment which attends them. And again t, he tells us that Youth, being of it felf averse from Abstinence and Sobriety, shou'd be under the Restraint of Laws regulating their Education and Employment, and that the fame Discipline shou'd be continued even after they became Men. For which, faith he, we want Laws, and, in one word, for the whole ordering of Life, inafmuch as the Generality of Mankind obey rather Force than Reason, and are influenced rather by Penalties than the Beauty of Virtue; Englises n To Rand. From all which it is very plain, what Aristotle wou'd have thought of those, who shou'd go about to lessen or destroy the Hopes and Fear of Mankind, in order to make them virtuous on this fole Principle of the Beauty of Virtue.

XIV. ALC. But, whatever the Stagirite and his Peripatetics, might think, is it not certain that the Stoics maintained this Doctrine in its highest Sense, afferting the Beauty of Virtue to be all-sufficient, that Virtue was her own Reward, that this alone cou'd make a Man happy, in spight of all those Things which are vulgarly esteemed the greatest Woes and Miseries of Human Life? And all

^{*} Ad Nicom. 1. 10. c. 8. † Ibid. c. 9. ‡ Ibid. this

this they held at the same time that they believed. the Soul of Man to be of a corporeal Nature, and in Death diffipated like a Flame or Vapour. CRI. It must be owned, the Stoics sometimes talk, as if they believed the Mortality of the Soul. Seneca in a Letter of his to Lucilius, speaks much like a Minute Philosopher, in this Particular. But in feveral other Places, he declares himself of a clear contrary Opinion, affirming that the Souls of Men after Death mount aloft into the Heavens, look down upon Earth, entertain themselves with the Theory of cælestial Bodies, the Course of Nature. and the Conversation of wife and excellent Men. who having lived in distant Ages and Countries upon Earth, make one Society in the other World. It must also be acknowledged, that Marcus Antoninus fometimes speaks of the Soul as perishing, or diffolving into its Elementary Parts: But it is to be noted, that he diftinguisheth three Principles in the Composition of Human Nature, the owner, toxis Body, Soul, Mind, or as he otherwise expresent himself, σαρκία, πνευμάτιον and ήγεμονικόν, Flesh, Spirit, and governing Principle. What he calls the Juxin, or Soul, containing the brutal Part of our Nature, is indeed represented as a Compound dissoluble, and actually dissolved by Death: But the ves or to nysporenov, the Mind or ruling Principle he held to be of a pure coelestial Nature, deou α'πόσπασμα a Particle of God, which he fends back intire to the Stars and the Divinity. Besides, among all his magnificent Leffons and fplendid Sentiments, upon the Force and Beauty of Virtue, he is positive as to the Being of God, and that not merely as a plastic Nature, or Soul of the World, but in the strict Sense of a Providence inspecting and taking care of Human Affairs +. The Stoics therefore, though their Style was high, and often

^{*} L. 3. c. 16. + Marc. Antonin. 1. 2. §. 11.

above Truth and Nature, yet, it cannot be faid, that they fo refolved every Motive to a virtuous Life into the fole Beauty of Virtue, as to endeavour to destroy the Belief of the Immortality of the Soul and a distributive Providence. After all, allowing the difinterested Stoics (therein not unlike our modern Quietists) to have made Virtue its own fole Reward, in the most rigid and absolute Sense, yet what is this to those who are no Stoics? If we adopt the whole Principles of that Sect, admitting their Notions of Good and Evil, their celebrated Apathy, and, in one word, fetting up for compleat Stoics, we may poffibly maintain this Doctrine with a better Grace; at least it will be of a piece and confistent with the whole. But he who shall borrow this splendid Patch from the Stoics, and hope to make a Figure by inferting it into a Piece of modern Composition, feafoned with the Wit and Notions of these Times, will indeed make a Figure, but perhaps it may not be in the Eyes of a wife Man the Figure he intended.

XV. Though it must be owned, the present Age is very indulgent to every thing that aims at profane Raillery; which is alone fufficient to recommend any fantastical Composition to the Public. You may behold the Tinsel of a modern Author pass upon this knowing and learned Age for good Writing; affected Strains for Wit; Pedantry for Politeness; Obscurities for Depths; Ramblings for Flights; the most aukward Imitation for original Humour; and all this upon the fole Merit of a little artful Profaneness. ALC. Every one is not alike pleased with Writings of Humour; nor alike capable of them. It is the fine Irony of a Man of Quality, 'That certain Reverend Authors, ' who can condescend to Lay-wit, are nicely qua-' lified to hit the Air of Breeding and Gentility, and ' and that they will in time, no doubt, refine their

Manner to the Edification of the polite World;

who have been fo long feduced by the way of Raillery and Wit.' The Truth is, the various Taste of Readers requireth various Kinds of Wri-Our Sect hath provided for this with great Judgment. To profelyte the graver fort we have certain profound Men at Reason and Argument. For the Coffee-houses and Populace we have Declaimers of a copious Vein. Of fuch a Writer it is no Reproach to fay, fluit lutulentus; he is the fitter for his Readers. Then, for Men of Rank and Politeness we have the finest and wittiest Railleurs in the World, whose Ridicule is the furest Test of Truth. EUPH. Tell me, Alciphron, are those ingenious Railleurs Men of Knowledge? ALC. Very knowing. EUPH. Do they know for Instance the Copernican System, or the Circulation of the Blood? ALC. One wou'd think you judged of our Sect, by your Country Neighbours: There is no body in Town but knows all those EUPH. You believe then Antipodes. Mountains in the Moon, and the Motion of the Earth. ALC. We do. EUPH. Suppose, five or fix Centuries ago, a Man had maintained these Notions among the beau Esprits of an English Court; how do you think they would have been received? ALC. With great Ridicule. EUPH. And now it wou'd be ridiculous to ridicule them. ALC. It wou'd. EUPH. But Truth was the fame then and now. ALC. It was. EUPH. It shou'd feem, therefore, that Ridicule is no fuch fovereign Touchstone and Test of Truth, as you Gentlemen imagine. ALC. One thing we know: Our Raillery and Sarcasms gall the black Tribe, and that is our Comfort. CRI. There is another thing it may be worth your while to know: That Men in a Laughing Fit may applaud a Ridicule, which shall appear contemptible

Dial. III. PHILOSOPHER. 131 contemptible when they come to themselves; witness the Ridicule of Socrates by the Comic Poet, the Humour and Reception it met with no more proving that, than the same will yours, to be just, when calmly considered by Men of Sense. ALC. After all, thus much is certain, our ingenious Men make Converts by deriding the Principles of Religion. And, take my word, it is the most successful and pleasing Method of Conviction. These Authors laugh Men out of their Religion, as

Horace did out of their Vices; Admissi circum pracordia ludunt. But a Bigot cannot relish or find

out their Wit.

XVI. CRI. Wit without Wisdom, if there be fuch a thing, is hardly worth finding. And as for the Wisdom of these Men, it is of a kind so peculiar one may well suspect it. Cicero was a Man of Sense, and no Bigot, nevertheless he makes Scipio own himself much more vigilant and vigorous in the Race of Virtue, from supposing Heaven the Prize *. And he introduceth Cato declaring, he wou'd never have undergone those virtuous Toils for the Service of the Public, if he had thought his Being was to end with this Life +. ALC. I acknowledge Cato, Scipio, and Cicero, were very well for their Times, but you must pardon me, if I do not think they arrived at the high confummate Virtue of our modern Free-thinkers. EUPH. It shou'd feem then that Virtue flourisheth more than ever among us. ALC. It shou'd. EUPH. And this abundant Virtue is owing to the Method taken by your profound Writers to recommend it. ALC. This I grant. EUPH. But you have acknowledged, that the Enthusiastic Lovers of Virtue are not the many of your Sect, but only a few felect Spirits. To which Alcipbron making no Answer, Crito addressed himself to Euphranor: To make,

Religion, have had their full Course in the present Age, and produced their Effect on the Minds and Manners of Men. That Men are Men is a fure Maxim: But it is as fure that Englishmen are not the fame Men they were; whether better or worfe. more or less virtuous, I need not fay. Every one Though, indeed, after Arifmay fee and judge. tides had been banished, and Socrates put to death at Athens, a Man, without being a Conjurer. might guess what the Beauty of Virtue cou'd do in England. But there is now neither room nor occafion for gueffing. We have our own Experience to open our Eyes; which yet if we continue to keep shut, till the Remains of religious Education are quite worn off from the Minds of Men, it is to be feared we shall then open them wide, not to avoid, but to behold and lament our Ruin. ALC. Be the Consequences what they will, I can never bring my felf to be of a mind with those, who measure Truth by Convenience. Truth is the only Divinity that I adore. Wherever Truth leads I shall follow. EUPH. You have then a Passion for Truth? ALC. Undoubtedly. EUPH. For all Truths? ALC. For all. EUPH. To know or to publish them? ALC. Both. EUPH. What! wou'd you undeceive a Child that was taking Physic? Wou'd you officiously fet an Enemy right, that was making a wrong Attack? Wou'd you help an enraged Man to his Sword? ALC. In fuch Cases, common Sense directs one how to behave. EUPH. Common Sense, it seems then, must be consulted whether a Truth be falutary or hurtful, fit to be declared or concealed. ALC. How! you wou'd have me conceal and stifle the Truth, and keep it to my felf? Is this what you aim at? EUPH. I only make a plain Inference from what you grant. As for my felf, I do not believe your Opinions true. And although you do, you shou'd not therefore,

It you wou'd appear confishent with yourself, think it necessary or wise to publish hurtful Truths. What Service can it do Mankind to lessen the Motives to Virtue, or what Damage to increase them? ALC. None in the World. But I must needs say, I cannot reconcile the received Notions of a God and Providence to my Understanding, and my Nature abhors conniving at a Falshood. EUPH. Shall we therefore appeal to Truth, and examine the Reasons by which you are withheld from believing these Points? ALC. With all my Heart, but enough for the present. We will make this the Subject of our next Conference.

NOTAL DE TRACE DE TRACE

The FOURTH DIALOGUE.

I. Prejudices concerning a Deity. II. Rules laid down by Alciphron to be observed in proving a God. III. What Sort of Proof be expects. IV. Whence we volled the being of other Thinking Individuals. V. The fame Method à fortiori proves the Being of God. VI. Alciphron's fecond Thoughts on this Point. VII. God Speaks to Men. VIII. How Diftance is perceived by Sight. IX. The proper Objects of Sight at no Distance. X. Lights, Shades and Colours variously combined form a Language. XI. The Signification of this Language learned by Experience. XII. God explaineth himself to the Eyes of Men by the arbitrary Use of sensible Signs. XIII. The Prejudice and two-fold Aspect of a Minute Philosopher. XIV. God present to Mankind, informs, admonishes, and directs them in a sensible Manner. XV. Admirable Nature and Ufe of this vifual Language. XVI. Minute Philosophers content to admit a God in certain Senses. XVII. Opinion of some who hold that Knowledge and Wisdom

M

Wisdom are not properly in God. XVIII. Dangerous Tendency of this Notion. XIX. Its Original.
XX. The Sense of Schoolmen upon it. XXI. Scholastic Use of the Terms Analogy and Analogical
explained: Analogical Persections of God misunderstood. XXII. God intelligent, wise, and good
in the proper Sense of the Words. XXIII. Objestion from Moral Evil considered. XXIV.
Men argue from their own Desects against a
Deity. XXV. Religious Worship reasonable and
expedient.

I.T. ARLY the next Morning, as I looked out of my Window, I faw Alcipbron walking in the Garden with all the Signs of a Man in deep Thought. Upon which I went down to him. Alcipbron, faid I, this early and profound Meditation puts me in no fmall Fright. How fo! Because I shou'd be forry to be convinced there was no God. The Thought of Anarchy in Nature is to me more shocking than in Civil Life; inasmuch as Natural Concerns are more important than Civil and the Basis of all others. I grant, replied Alcipbron, that fome Inconvenience may possibly follow from difproving a God, but as to what you fay of Fright and Shocking, all that is nothing but mere Prejudice. Men frame an Idea or Chimæra in their own Minds, and then fall down and worship it. Notions govern Mankind, but of all Notions, that of God's governing the World hath taken the deepest Root and spread the farthest: It is therefore in Philosophy an heroical Atchievement to dispossess this imaginary Monarch of his Government, and banish all those Fears and Spectres which the Light of Reason alone can dispel;

Non radii solis, non lucida tela diei Discutiunt, sed Naturæ species ratioque*. K. 2

^{*} Lucretius.

My Part, faid I, shall be to stand by, as I have hitherto done, and take Notes of all that passeth during this memorable Event, while a Minute Philofopher not fix Foot high attempts to dethrone the Monarch of the Universe. Alas! replied Alcipbron, Arguments are not to be measured by Feet and Inches. One Man may fee more than a Million: and a short Argument, managed by a Free-thinker, may be fufficient to overthrow the most Gigantic Chimæra. As we were engaged in this Difcourse, Crito and Euphranor joined us. I find you have been beforehand with us to day, faid Crito to Alcipbron, and taken the Advantage of Solitude and early Hours, while Euphranor and I were afleep in our Beds. We may therefore expect to fee Atheism placed in the best Light, and supported by the

strongest Arguments.

II. ALC. The Being of a God is a Subject upon which there has been a world of Common-place, which it is needless to repeat. Give me leave therefore to lay down certain Rules and Limitations, in order to shorten our present Conference. For as the End of debating is to perfuade, all those Things which are foreign to this End shou'd be left out of First then, let me tell you, I am not our Debate. to be perfuaded by Metaphyfical Arguments; fuch for Instance as are drawn from the Idea of an Allperfect Being, or the Absurdity of an infinite Progression of Causes. This fort of Arguments I have always found dry and jejune; and, as they are not fuited to my way of Thinking, they may perhaps puzzle, but never will convince me. Secondly, I am not to be perfuaded by the Authority either of past or present Ages, of Mankind in general, or of particular wife Men, all which paffeth for little or nothing with a Man of found Argument and free Thought. Thirdly, All Proofs drawn from Utility or Convenience are foreign to the purpose. They

may prove indeed the Usefulness of the Notion, but not the Existence of the Thing. Whatever Legislators or Statesmen may think, Truth and Convenience are very different Things to the rigorous Eyes of a Philosopher. And now, that I may not feem partial, I will limit myself also not to object, in the first place, from any thing that may feem irregular or unaccountable in the Works of Nature, against a Cause of infinite Power and Wisdom; because I already know the Answer you wou'd make, to wit, That no one can judge of the Symmetry and Use of the Parts of an infinite Machine, which are all relative to each other, and to the whole, without being able to comprehend the intire Machine or the whole Universe. And in the fecond place, I shall engage my felf not to object against the Justice and Providence of a Supreme-Being, from the Evil that befals good Men, and the Prosperity which is often the Portion of wicked Men in this Life, because I know that, instead of admitting this to be an Objection against a Deity, you wou'd make it an Argument for a future State; in which there shall be such a Retribution of Rewards and Punishments, as may vindicate the Divine Attributes, and fet all Things right in the Now these Answers, though they shou'd be admitted for good ones are in truth no Proofs of the Being of God, but only Solutions of certain Difficulties which might be objected, supposing it already proved by proper Arguments. Thus much I thought fit to premise, in order to save Time and Trouble both to you and myfelf. CRI. I think that, as the proper End of our Conference ought to be supposed the Discovery and Defence of Truth, so Truth may be justified, not only by persuading its Adversaries, but, where that cannot be done, by shewing them to be unreasonable. Arguments, therefore, which carry Light, have their Effect, K 3 even even against an Opponent who shuts his Eyes, because they shew him to be obstinate and prejudiced. Besides, this Distinction between Arguments that puzzle and that convince, is least of all observed by Minute Philosophers, and need not therefore be observed by others in their sayour. But, perhaps Euphranor may be willing to encounter you on your own Terms, in which

Case I have nothing farther to say.

III. EUPH. Alciphron acts like a skilful General, who is bent upon gaining the Advantage of the Ground, and alluring the Enemy out of their Trenches. We, who believe a God, are intrenched within Tradition, Cuftom, Authority, and Law. And nevertheless, instead of attempting to force us, he proposes that we shou'd voluntarily abandon these Intrenchments, and make the Attack, when we may act on the defensive with much Security and Ease, leaving him the Trouble to dispossess us of what we need not resign. Those Reasons (continued he, addressing himself to Aleiphron) which you have mustered up in this Morning's Meditation, if they do not weaken, must establish our Belief of a God; for the utmost is to be expected from so great a Master in his Profession, when he sets his Strength to a Point. ALC. I hold the confused Notion of a Deity, or some invisible Power, to be of all Prejudices the most unconquerable. When half a dozen ingenious Men are got together over a Glass of Wine, by a chearful Fire, in a Room well lighted, we banish with ease all the Spectres of Fancy or Education, and are very clear in our Decisions. But, as I was taking a solitary Walk before it was broad Day-light in yonder Grove, methought the Point was not quite fo clear; nor cou'd I readily recollect the Force of those Arguments, which used to appear so conclusive at other Times,

Times. I had I know not what Awe upon my Mind, and seemed haunted by a fort of Panic, which I cannot otherwise account for, than by suppoling it the Effect of Prejudice: For you must know, that I, like the rest of the World, was once upon a Time catechifed and tutored into the Belief of a God or Spirit. There is no furer Mark of Prejudice, than the believing a Thing without Reason. What Necessity then can there be that I shou'd set myself the difficult Task of proving a Negative, when it is sufficient to obferve that there is no Proof of the Affirmative, and that the admitting it without Proof is unreafonable? Prove therefore your Opinion, or, if you cannot, you may indeed remain in possession of it, but you will only be possessed of a Prejudice. EUPH. O Alcipbron, to content you we must prove, it feems, and we must prove upon your own Terms. But, in the first place, let us fee what fort of Proof you expect. ALC. Perhaps I neay not expect it, but I will tell you what fort of Proof I wou'd have: And that is in short, such Proof as every Man of Sense requires of a Matter of Fact, or the Existence of any other particular Thing. For Instance, shou'd a Man ask why I believe there is a King of Great Britain? I might answer because I had seen him; Or a King of Spain? because I had seen those who saw him. But as for this King of Kings, I neither faw him myfelf, nor any one elfe that ever did fee him. Surely if there be fuch a Thing as God, it is very strange, that he shou'd leave himself without a Witness; that Men shou'd still dispute his Being; and that there shou'd be no one evident, fensible, plain Proof of it without recourse to Philosophy. or Metaphysics. A Matter of Fact is not to be proved by Notions, but by Facts. This is clear and full to the Point. You fee what I wou'd be

at. Upon these Principles I defy Superstition. EUPH. You believe then as far as you can see. ALC. That is my Rule of Faith. EUPH. How! will you not believe the Existence of Things which you hear, unless you also see them? ALC. I will not say so neither. When I insisted on seeing I wou'd be understood to mean perceiving in general: Outward Objects make very different Impressions upon the animal Spirits, all which are comprised under the common Name of Sense. And whatever we can perceive by any Sense we

may be fure of.

IV. EUPH. What! do you believe then there are fuch Things as animal Spirits? ALC. Doubtless. EUPH. By what Sense do you perceive them? ALC. I do not perceive them immediately by any of my Senses. I am nevertheless persuaded of their Existence, because I can collect it from their Effects and Operations. They are the Meffengers, which running to and fro in the Nerves, preserve a Communication between the Soul and outward Objects. EUPH. You admit then the Being of a Soul. ALC. Provided I do not admit an immaterial Substance, I see no Inconvenience in admitting there may be such a Thing as a Soul-And this may be no more than a thin fine Texture of fubtile Parts or Spirits residing in the Brain. EUPH. I do not ask about its Nature. I only ask whether you admit that there is a Principle of Thought and Action, and whether it be perceivable by Senfe. ALC. I grant that there is fuch a Principle, and that it is not the Object of Sense itself, but inferred from Appearances which are perceived by Sense. EUPH. If I understand you rightly, from animal Functions and Motions you infer the Existence of animal Spirits, and from reasonable Acts you infer the Existence of a reafonable Soul. Is it not so? ALC. It is, EUPH.

It shou'd feem, therefore, that the Being of Things imperceptible to Sense may be collected from Effects and Signs, or fenfible Tokens. ALC. It may. EUPH. Tell me, Alcipbron, is not the Soul that which makes the principal Distinction between a real Person and a Shadow, a living Man and a Carcase? ALC. I grant it is. EUPH. I cannot, therefore, know that you for Instance are a distinct thinking Individual, or a living real Man, by furer or other Signs than those from which it can be inferred that you have a Soul. ALC. You cannot. EUPH. Pray tell me, are not all acts immediately and properly perceived by Sense reducible to Motion? ALC. They are. EUPH. From Motions therefore you infer a Mover or Cause: and from reasonable Motions (or such as appear calculated for a reasonable End) a rational Cause, Soul, or Spirit. ALC. Even so.

V. EUPH. The Soul of Man actuates but a small Body, an infignificant Particle, in respect of the great Masses of Nature, the Elements, and heavenly Bodies, and System of the World. And the Wisdom that appears in those Motions, which are the Effect of Human Reason, is incomparably less than that which discovers itself, in the structure and use of organized natural Bodies, Animal or Vegetable. A Man with his Hand can make no Machine fo admirable as the Hand itself: Nor can any of those Motions, by which we trace out Human Reason, approach the skill and contrivance of those wonderful Motions of the Heart and Brain and other vital parts, which do not depend on the Will of Man. ALC. All this is true. EUPH. Doth it not follow then that from natural Motions, independent of Man's Will, may be inferred both Power and Wisdom incomparably greater than that of the Human Soul? ALC. It shou'd seem so. EUPH. Further, is there not in natural

Dial. IV. natural Productions and Effects a visible Unity of counsel and design? Are not the Rules fixed and immoveable? Do not the same Laws of Motion obtain throughout? The fame in China and here. the same two thousand years ago and at this day? ALC. All this I do not deny, EUPH. Is there not also a Connexion or Relation between Animals and Vegetables, between both and the Elements. between the Elements and Heavenly Bodies; fo that from their mutual Respects, Influences, Subordinations, and Uses, they may be collected to be parts of one whole, conspiring to one and the fame end, and fulfilling the fame defign? ALC. Supposing all this to be true. EUPH. Will it not then follow, that this vastly great or infinite Power and Wisdom must be supposed in one and the fame Agent, Spirit, or Mind, and that we have. at least, as clear, full and immediate Certainty of the being of this infinitely wife and powerful Spirit, as of any one Human Soul whatfoever besides our own? ALC. Let me consider; I suspect we proceed too hastily. What! Do you pretend you can have the fame Affurance of the Being of a God, that you can have of mine whom you actually fee stand before you and talk to you? EUPH. The very same, if not greater. ALC. How do you make this appear? EUPH. By the person Alcipbron is meant an individual thinking thing, and not the Hair, Skin or visible Surface, or any part of the outward Form, Colour, or Shape of Alciphron. ALC. This I grant. EUPH. And in granting this, you grant that in a strict Sense, I do not fee Alcipbron, i. e. that individual thinking thing, but only fuch visible figns and tokens, as fuggest and infer the Being of that invisible thinking Principle or Soul. Even fo, in the felf fame manner it feems to me, that though I cannot with Eyes of Flesh behold the Invisible God; yet I do in the

ftricteft

ftrictest Sense behold and perceive by all my Senses fuch Signs and Tokens, fuch Effects and Operations, as fuggest, indicate, and demonstrate an invisible God, as certainly and with the same Evidence, at least, as any other Signs, perceived by Sense, do suggest to me the Existence of your Soul, Spirit, or thinking Principle; which I am convinced of only by a few Signs or Effects, and the Motions of one small organized Body: Whereas I do, at all times and in all places, perceive fenfible Signs, which evince the Being of God. The point, therefore, doubted or denied by you at the beginning now feems manifestly to follow from the Premises. Throughout this whole Inquiry, have we not confidered every step with care, and made not the least advance without clear Evidence? You and I examined and affented fingly to each foregoing Proposition: What shall we do then with the Conclusion? For my part, if you do not help me out, I find my felf under an absolute necessity of admitting it for true. You must therefore be content, henceforward to bear the blame, if I live and die in the Belief of a and the the

VI. ALC. It must be confest, I do not readily find an answer. There seems to be some Foundation for what you say. But on the other hand, if the point was so clear as you pretend, I cannot conceive how so many sagacious Men of our Sect shou'd be so much in the dark, as not to know or believe one Syllable of it. EUPH. O Ascipbron, it is not our present business to account for the Oversights, or vindicate the Honour of those great Men the Free-thinkers, when their very Existence is in danger of being called in question. ALC. How so? EUPH. Be pleased to recollect the Concessions you have made, and then shew me, if the Arguments for a Deity be not conclusive, by what better

better Argument you can prove the Existence of that thinking Thing, which in strictness constitutes the Free-thinker. As foon as Euphranor had uttered these Words, Alcipbron stopt short and flood in a posture of Meditation, while the rest of us continued our walk and took two or three turns, after which he joined us again with a smiling Countenance, like one who had made fome Discovery. I have found, said he, what may clear up the point in dispute, and give Eupbranor intire fatisfaction; I wou'd fay an Argument which will prove the Existence of a Free-thinker, the like whereof cannot be applied to prove the Existence of a God. You must know then, that your Notion of our perceiving the Existence of God. as certainly and immediately as we do that of a Human Person, I cou'd by no means digest, though I must own it puzzled me, till I had confidered the matter. At first methought, a particular Structure, Shape, or Motion was the most certain Proof of a thinking, reasonable Soul. But a little attention fatisfied me, that thefe things have no necessary Connexion with Reason, Knowledge, and Wisdom. And that allowing them to be certain Proofs of a living Soul, they cannot be to of a thinking and reasonable one. Upon second Thoughts, therefore, and a minute Examination of this point, I have found that nothing fo much convinces me of the Existence of another Person as his speaking to me. It is my hearing you talk that, in strict and philosophical Truth, is to me the best Argument for your Being. And this is a peculiar Argument inapplicable to your purpose: for you will not, I suppose, pretend that God speaks to Man in the same clear and sensible manner, as one Man doth to another.

VII, EUPH. How! is then the Impression of Sound so much more evident than that of other Senses?

Senses? Or, if it be, is the voice of Man louder than that of Thunder? ALC. Alas! You miftake the point. What I mean is not the Sound of Speech meerly as fuch, but the arbitrary use of fenfible Signs, which have no Similitude or neceffary Connexion with the things fignified, fo as by the apposite Management of them, to suggest and exhibit to my mind an endless variety of things, different in nature, time and place, thereby informing me, entertaining me, and directing me how to act, not only with regard to things near and present, but also with regard to things distant and future. No matter, whether these Signs are pronounced or written, whether they enter by the Eye or the Ear: they have the same use, and are equally Proofs of an intelligent, thinking, defigning Cause. EUPH. But what if it shou'd appear that God really speaks to Man; wou'd this content you? ALC. I am for admitting no inward Speech, no holy Instincts, or Suggestions of Light or Spirit. All that, you must know, passeth with Men of Sense for nothing. If you do not make it plain to me, that God speaks to Men by outward fensible Signs, of such fort and in fuch manner, as I have defined, you do nothing. EUPH. But if it shall appear plainly, that God speaks to Men, by the intervention and use of arbitrary, outward, fensible Signs, having no Refemblance or necessary Connexion with the things they stand for and suggest: if it shall appear, that by innumerable Combinations of these Signs, an endless variety of things is discovered and made known to us; and that we are thereby inttructed or informed in their different Natures, that we are taught and admonished what to shun, and what to purfue; and are directed how to regulate our Motions, and how to act with respect to things distant from us, as well in time as place; will will this content you? ALC. It is the very thing I wou'd have you make out: for therein confifts the force and use and nature of Language.

VIII. EUPH. Look, Alciphron, do you not fee the Castle upon yonder Hill? ALC. I do. EUPH. Is it not at a great Distance from you? ALC. It is. EUPH. Tell me, Alcipbron, is not Distance a Line turned End-wife to the Eye? ALC. Doubtless. EUPH. And can a Line, in that Situation, project more than one fingle Point on the Bottom of the Eye? ALC. It cannot. EUPH. Therefore the Appearance of a long and of a short Distance is of the same Magnitude, or rather of no Magnitude at all, being in all Cases one single Point. ALC. It feems fo. EUPH. Shou'd it not follow from hence, that distance is not immediately perceived by the Eye? ALC. It shou'd. EUPH. Must it not then be perceived by the mediation of some other Thing? ALC. It must. EUPH. To discover what this is, let us examine what Alteration there may be in the Appearance of the same Object, placed at different Distances from the Eye. Now I find by Experience that, when an Object is removed still farther and farther off in a direct Line from the Eye, its visible Appearance still grows lesser and fainter, and this Change of Appearance, being proportional and universal, seems to me to be that by which we apprehend the various Degrees of Distance. ALC. I have nothing to object to this. EUPH. But Littleness or Faintness, in their own Nature, feem to have no necessary Connexion with greater Length of Distance. ALC. I admit this to be true. EUPH. Will it not follow then, they cou'd never fuggest it but from Experience? ALC. It will. EUPH. That is to fay, we perceive Distance, not immediately, but by mediation of a Sign, which hath no Likeness to it, or necessary Connexion with it, only fuggests from repeated Experience

perience as Words do Things. ALC. Hold, Euphranor; now I think of it, the Writers in Optics tell us of an Angle made by the two Optic Axes, where they meet in the visible Point or Object: which Angle the obtuser it is the nearer it shews the Object to be, and by how much the acuter by fo much the farther off; and this by a necessary demonstrable Connection. EUPH. The Mind then finds out the Distance of Things by Geometry. ALC. It doth. EUPH. Shou'd it not follow therefore that no body cou'd fee but those who had learned Geometry, and knew fomething of Lines and Angles? ALC. There is a fort of natural Geometry which is got without Learning. EUPH. Pray inform me, Alcipbron, in order to frame a Proof of any kind, or deduce one Point from another, is it not necessary, that I perceive the Connexion of the Terms in the Premises, and the Connexion of the Premises with the Conclusion: and, in general, to know one Thing by means of another, must I not first know that other Thing? when I perceive your Meaning by your Words, must I not first perceive the Words themselves? and must I not know the Premises before I infer the Conclusion? ALC. All this is true. EUPH. Whoever therefore collects a nearer Distance from a wider Angle, or a farther Distance from an acuter Angle, must first perceive the Angles themselves. And he who doth not perceive those Angles, can infer nothing from them. Is it fo or not? ALC. It is as you fay. EUPH. Ask now the first Man you meet, whether he perceives or knows any thing of those Optic Angles? Or whether he ever thinks about them, or makes any Inferences from them, either by natural or artificial Geometry? What Answer do you think he wou'd make? ALC. To speak the Truth, I believe his Answer wou'd be, that he knew nothing of those Matters. EUPH. It cannot therefore be, that Men judge of Distance by Angles: Nor consequently can there be any Force in the Argument you draw from thence, to prove that Distance is perceived by means of something which hath a necessary Connexion with it. ALC. I agree with you.

IX. EUPH. To me it feems, that a Man may know whether he perceives a Thing or no; and if he perceives it, whether it be immediately or mediately: And if mediately, whether by means of fomething like or unlike, necessarily or arbitrarily connected with it. ALC. It feems fo. And is it not certain, that Distance is perceived only by Experience, if it be neither perceived immediately by itself, nor by means of any Image, nor of any Lines and Angles, which are like it, or have a necessary Connexion with it? ALC. It is. EUPH. Doth it not feem to follow from what hath been faid and allowed by you; that before all Experience a Man wou'd not imagine the Things he faw were at any Distance from him? ALC. How! let me see. EUPH. The Littleness or Faintness of Appearance, or any other Idea or Senfation, not necessarily connected with or resembling Distance, can no more fuggest different Degrees of Distance, or any Distance at all, to the Mind, which hath not experienced a Connexion of the Things fignifying and fignified, than words can fuggest Notions before a Man hath learned the Language. ALC. I allow this to be true. EUPH. Will it not thence follow, that a Man born blind, and made to fee, wou'd, upon first receiving his Sight, take the Things he faw, not to be at any Distance from him, but in his Eye, or rather in his Mind? ALC. I must own it feems so; and yet, on the other hand, I can hardly persuade myself, that, if I were in fuch a State, I shou'd think those Objects, which I now see at so great Distance, to be at no Distance

ance at all. EUPH. It feems then, that you now think the Objects of Sight are at a great Distance from you. ALC. Doubtless I do. Can any one question but yonder Castle is at a great Distance? EUPH. Tell me, Alcipbron, can you difcern the Doors, Windows, and Battlements of that same Castle? ALC. I cannot. At this Distance it seems only a small round Tower. EUPH. But I, who have been at it, know that it is no small round Tower, but a large square Building with Battlements and Turrets, which it feems you do not fee. ALC What will you infer from thence? EUPH. I wou'd infer that the very Object, which you strictly and properly perceive by Sight, is not that Thing which is feveral Miles distant. ALC. Why fo? EUPH. Because a little round Object is one thing, and a great square Object is another. Is it not? ALC. I cannot deny it. EUPH. Tell me, is not the visible Appearance alone the proper Object of Sight? ALC. It is. What think you then (faid Euphranor pointing towards the Heavens) of the visible appearance of yonder Planet? Is it not a round luminous Flat, no bigger than a Sixpence? ALC. What then? EUPH. Tell me then, what you think of the Planet itself. Do you not conceive it to be a vast Opaque Globe, with feveral unequal Rifings and Vallies? ALC. I do. EUPH. How can you therefore conclude, that the proper Object of your Sight exists at a Distance? ALC. I confess I know not. EUPH. For your farther Conviction, do but confider that crimfon Cloud. Think you that if you were in the very Place where it is, you wou'd perceive any Thing like what you now fee? ALC. By no means. I shou'd perceive only a dark Mist. EUPH. Is it not plain, therefore, that neither the Castle, the Planet, nor the Cloud, which you fee here, are L

150 THE MINUTE Dial. IV. those real ones which you suppose exists at a Distance?

X. ALC. What am I to think then? Do we fee any thing at all, or is it altogether Fancy and Illusion? EUPH. Upon the whole, it feems the proper Objects of Sight are Light and Colour, with their feveral Shades and Degrees, all which, being infinitely divertified and combined, do form a Language wonderfully adapted to fuggest and exhibit to us the Distances, Figures, Situations, Dimensions, and various Qualities of tangible Objects; not by Similitude, nor yet by the arbitrary Imposition of Providence, just as Words suggest the Things fignified by them. ALC. How! Do we not, firictly speaking, perceive by Sight such Things as Trees, Houses, Men, Rivers, and the like? EUPH. We do, indeed, perceive or apprehend those Things by the Faculty of Sight. But will it follow from thence, that they are the proper and immediate Objects of Hearing, which are fignified by the Help of Words or Sounds? ALC. You wou'd have us think then, that Light, Shades, and Colours, variously combined, answer to the feveral Articulations of Sounds in Language, and that, by means thereof, all forts of Objects are fuggested to the mind through the Eye, in the fame manner as they are fuggested by Words, or Sounds through the Ear; that is, neither from necessary Deduction to the Judgment, nor from Similitude to the Fancy, but purely and folely from Experience, Custom, and Habit. EUPH. I wou'd not have you think any thing, more than the Nature of Things obligeth you to think, nor fubmit in the least to my Judgment, but only to the Force of Truth, which is an Imposition that I suppole the freest Thinkers will not pretend to be exempt from. ALC. You have led me, it feems, Step by Step, 'till I am got I know not where. But I shall

XI. Answer me, Eupbraner, shou'd it not follow from these Principles, that a Man born blind, and made to fee, wou'd at first Sight, not only not perceive their Distance, but also not so much as know the very Things themselves which he faw, for Instance, Men or Trees? which surely to suppose must be absurd. EUPH. I grant, in consequence of those Principles, which both you and I have admitted, that fuch a one wou'd never think of Men, Trees, or any other Objects that he had been accustomed to perceive by Touch, upon having his Mind filled with new Sensations of Light and Colours, whose various Combinations he doth not yet understand, or know the Meaning of, no more than a Chinese, upon first hearing the Words Man and Tree, wou'd think of the Things fignified by them. In both Cases, there must be Time and Experience, by repeated Acts, to acquire a Habit of knowing the connexion between the Signs and Things fignified, that is to fay, of understanding the Language, whether of the Eyes or of the Ears. And I conceive no Abfurdity in all this. ALC. I fee therefore, in strict Philosophical Truth, that Rock only in the same Sense that I may be faid to hear it, when the Word Rock is pronounced. EUPH. In the very fame. ALC. How comes it to pass then, that every one shall say he sees, for Instance a Rock or a House, when those things are before his Eyes; but no body will fay he hears a Rock or a House, but only the words or sounds themselves, by which those things are said to be fignified or fuggested, but not heard? Besides, if Vision be only a Language speaking to the Eyes, it may be asked; When did Men learn this Lan-

guage

THE MINUTE Dial. IV 152 guage? To acquire the knowledge of fo many Signs, as go to the making up a Language, is a work of some difficulty. But will any Man fay he hath spent time, or been at pains, to learn this Language of Vision? EUPH. No wonder we cannot affign a time beyond our remotest Memory. If we have been all practifing this Language, ever fince our first entrance in the World: If the Author of Nature conftantly speaks to the Eyes of all Mankind, even in their earliest Infancy, whenever the Eyes are opened in the Light, whether alone or in Company: It doth not feem to me at all strange, that Men shou'd not be aware they had ever learned a Language, begun fo early, and practifed fo constantly, as this of Vision. And, if we also consider that it is the same throughout the whole World, and not, like other Languages, differing in different places, it will not feem unaccountable, that Men shou'd mistake the Connexion between the proper Objects of Sight and the things fignified by them, to be founded in neceffary Relation, or likeness, or that they should even take them for the fame things. Hence it feems easy to conceive, why Men, who do not think, shou'd confound in this Language of Vifion the Signs with the things fignified, otherwife than they are wont to do, in the various particular Languages formed by the feveral Na-

XII. It may be also worth while to observe, that Signs being little considered in themselves, or for their own sake, but only in their relative Capacity, and for the sake of those things whereof they are Signs, it comes to pass, that the mind often overlooks them, so as to carry its Attention immediately on those things signified. Thus, for example, in reading we run over the Characters with the slightest regard, and pass on to the meaning. Hence

tions of Men.

Hence it is frequent for Men to fay, they fee Words, and Notions, and Things in reading of a Book; whereas in strictness, they see only the Characters, which fuggest Words, Notions, and Things. And by parity of Rea on, may we not suppose, that Men, not resting in, but overlooking, the immediate and proper Objects of Sight, as in their own nature of small moment, carry their Attention onward to the very thing fignified, and talk as if they faw the secondary Objects? which in truth and strictness, are not seen but only fuggested and apprehended by means of the proper Objects of Sight, which alone are feen. ALC. To speak my mind freely, this Differtation grows tedious, and runs into points too dry and minute for a Gentleman's Attention. I thought faid Crito, we had been told, the Minute Philosophers loved to confider things closely and minutely. ALC. That is true, but in fo polite an Age who wou'd be a meer Philosopher? There is a certain scholastic Accuracy which ill suits the freedom and ease of a well-bred Man. But to cut short this Chicane, I propound it fairly to your own Conscience, whether you really think, that God himfelf speaks every day and in ever place to the Eyes of all Men? EUPH. That is really and in truth my Opinion; and it shou'd be yours too, if you are confistent with your felf, and abide by your own Definition of Language. Since you cannot deny, that the great Mover and Author of Nature constantly explaineth himself to the Eyes of Men, by the fensible intervention of arbitrary Signs, which have no fimilitude or Connexion with the things fignified; fo as by compounding and disposing them to fuggest and exhibit an endless variety of Objects differing in nature, time and place, thereby informing and directing Men, how to act with respect to things distant and future, as well as near L 3

nura.

your Eyes, as you can have for thinking any particular Person speaks to your Ears. ALC. I cannot help thinking, that fome Fallacy runs throughout this whole Ratiocination, though perhaps I may not readily point it out. Hold! let me see. In Language the Signs are arbitrary, are they not? EUPH. They are. ALC. And confequently, they do not always suggest real matters of Fact. Whereas this natural Language, as you call it, or these visible Signs do always suggest things, in the same uniform way, and have the same constant regular Connexion with matters of Fact: whence it shou'd feem, the Connexion was necessary, and therefore, according to the Definition premised, it can be no Language. How do you folve this Objection? EUPH. You may folve it your felf, by the help of a Picture or Looking-glass, ALC. You are in the right. I fee there is nothing in it. I know not what else to say to this Opinion, more than that it is so odd and contrary to my way of thinking, that I shall never affent to it.

XIII. EUPH. Be pleased to recollect your own Lectures upon Prejudice, and apply them in the present case. Perhaps they may help you to follow where Reason leads, and to suspect Notions which are strongly riveted, without having been ever examined. ALC. I disdain the suspicion of Prejudice. And I do not speak only for my self. I know a Club of most ingenious Men, the freest from Prejudice of any Men alive, who abhor the Notion of a God, and I doubt not wou'd be very able to untie this knot. Upon which Words of Alcipbron, I, who had acted the part of an indifferent stander-by, observed to him, that it misbecame his Character and repeated Professions, to own an At-

tachment

tachment to the Judgment, or build upon the prefumed Abilities of other Men how ingenious foever: and that this proceeding might encourage his Adversaries to have recourse to Authority, in which perhaps they wou'd find their account more than he. Oh! faid Crito, I have often observed the Conduct of Minute Philosophers. When one of them has got a ring of Disciples round him, his method is to exclaim against Prejudice, and recommend thinking and reasoning, giving to understand that himself is a Man of deep Researches and close Argument, one who examines impartially and concludes warily. The fame Man in other Company, if he chance to be preffed with Reason, shall laugh at Logic and assume the lazy supine Airs of a fine Gentleman, a Wit, a Railleur, to avoid the dryness of a regular and exact Inquiry. This double Face of the Minute Philosopher is of no small use to propagate and maintain his Notions. Though to me it seems a plain Case, that if a fine Gentleman will shake off Authority, and appeal from Religion to Reason, unto Reason he must go: And if he cannot go without leading strings, furely he had better be led by the Authority of the Public, than by that of any knot of Minute Philosophers. ALC. Gentlemen, this Discourse is very irksome and needless. For my part, I am a friend to Inquiry. I am willing Reason shou'd have its full and free Scope. Ibuild on no Man's Authority. For my part I have no inferest in denying a God. Any Man may believe or not believe a God as he pleafes for me. But after all, Eupbranor must allow me to stare a little at his Conclusions. EUPH. The Conclusions are yours as much as mine, for you were led to them by your own Concessions.

XIV. You it feems stare to find, that God is not far from every one of us, and that in him we live and move and have our Being. You, who in the beginning of this Morning's Conference. thought it strange, that God shou'd leave himself without a witness, do now think it strange the witness shou'd be so full and clear. ALC. I must own I do. I was aware, indeed, of a certain Metaphyfical Hypothesis, of our seeing all things in God by the union of the Humane Soul with the intelligible Substance of the Deity, which neither I nor any one else cou'd make sense of. But I never imagined it cou'd be pretended, that we faw God with our fleshly Eyes as plain as we see any Human Person whatsoever, and that he daily speaks to our Senses in a manifest and clear Dialect. CRI. This Language hath a necessary Connexion with Knowledge, Wisdom and Goodness. It is equivalent to a constant Creation, betokening an immediate act of Power and Providence. It cannot be accounted for by mechanical Principles, by Atoms, Attractions, or Effluvia. The instantaneous Production and Reproduction of fo many Signs combined, diffolved, transposed, diversified, and adapted to such an endless variety of purposes, ever shifting with the occasions and suited to them, being utterly inexplicable and unaccountable by the Laws of Motion, by Chance, by Fate, or the like blind Principles, doth fet forth and testify the immediate Operation of a Spirit, or thinking Being; and not merely of a Spirit, which every Motion or Gravitation may possibly infer, but of one wife, good and provident Spirit, who directs and rules and governs the World. Some Philosophers, being convinced of the Wisdom and Power of the Creator, from the make and contrivance of organized Bodies and orderly System of the World, did nevertheless imagine, that he left this System with all its parts and contents well adjusted and put in motion, as an Artist leaves a Clock, to go thenceforward of it felf for a certain Period. But this vifual Language proves,

THE MINUTE Dial. IV.

156

proves, not a Creator meerly, but a provident Governor actually and intimately present and attentive to all our Interests and Motions; who watches over our Conduct, and takes care of our minutest Actions and Designs, throughout the whole course of our lives, informing, and directing incessantly, in a most evident and sensible manner. This is truly wonderful. EUPH. And is it not so, that Men shou'd be encompassed by such a wonder, without

reflecting on it?

XV. Something there is of Divine and Admitable in this Language, addressed to our Eyes, that may well awaken the Mind, and deferve its utmost Attention; it is learned with fo little pains, it expresseth the Differences of things so clearly and aptly, it instructs with such Facility and Dispatch, by one Glance of the Eye conveying a greater Variety of Advices, and a more distinct Knowledge of Things, than cou'd be got by a Discourse of feveral Hours. And, while it informs, it amuses and entertains the Mind with fuch fingular Pleafure and Delight. It is of fuch excellent Use in giving a Stability and Permanency to Human Difcourfe, in recording Sounds and bestowing Life on dead Languages, enabling us to converse with Men of remote Ages and Countries. And it anfwers fo apposite to the Uses and Necessities of Mankind, informing us more diffinctly of those Objects, whose Nearness and Magnitude qualify them to be of greatest Detriment or Benefit to our Bodies, and less exactly, in Proportion as their Littleness or Distance make them of less Concern to us. ALC. And yet these strange Things affect Men but little. EUPH. But they are not strange, they are familiar, and that makes them be overlooked. Things which rarely happen strikes; whereas Frequency lessens the Admiration of Things, though in themselves ever so admirable. Hence

Hence a common Man, who is not used to think and make Reflexions, wou'd probably be more convinced of the Being of a God, by one fingle Sentence heard once in his life from the Sky, than by all the Experience he has had of this vifual Language, contrived with such exquisite skill, so conflantly addressed to his Eyes, and so plainly declaring the Nearness, Wisdom, and Providence of him with whom we have to do. ALC. After all, I cannot fatisfy my felf, how Men shou'd be so little furprised or amazed about this visive Faculty, if it was really of a nature fo furprising and amazing. EUPH. But let us suppose a Nation of Men blind from their Infancy, among whom a Stranger arrives, the only Man who can fee in all the Country: Let us suppose this Stranger travelling with some of the Natives, and that one while he foretells to them, that, in case they walk straight forward, in half an Hour they shall meet Men or Cattle or come to a House; that if they turn to the right and proceed, they shall in a few Minutes be in danger of falling down a Precipice; that fhaping their course to the left, they will in such a time arrive at a River, a Wood or a Mountain. What think you? Must they not be infinitely surprifed, that one, who had never been in their Country before shou'd know it so much better than themselves? And wou'd not those Predictions feem to them as unaccountable and incredible, as Prophecy to a Minute Philosopher? ALC. I cannot deny it. EUPH. But it feems to require intenfe thought, to be able to unravel a Prejudice that has been fo long forming, to get over the vulgar Error of Ideas common to both Senses, and fo to diffinguish between the Objects of Sight and Touch, which have grown (if I may fo fay) blended together in our Fancy, as to be able to suppose our selves exactly in the State, that one of those Men

Men wou'd be in, if he were made to fee. And yet this I believe is possible, and might seem worth the pains of a little thinking, especially to those Men whose proper Employment and Profession it is to think, and unravel Prejudices, and confute Mistakes. I frankly own I cannot find my way out of this Maze, and shou'd gladly be set right by those who see better than my felf. CRI. The pursuing this Subject in their own Thoughts wou'd possibly open a new Scene, to those speculative Gentlemen of the Minute Philosophy. It puts me in mind of a passage in the Psalmist, where he represents God to be covered with Light as with a Garment, and wou'd methinks be no ill Comment on that ancient Notion of some Eastern Sages: That God had Light for his Body, and Truth for his Soul. This Conversation lasted till a Serwant came to tell us the Tea was ready: Upon which we walked in, and found Lysicles at the Tea-table.

XVI. As foon as we fat down, I am glad, faid Alcipbron, that I have here found my Second, a fresh man to maintain our common Cause, which, I doubt, Lysicles will think hath suffered by his abfence. LYS. Why fo? ALC. I have been drawn into fome Concessions you won't like, LYS. Let me know what they are. ALC. Why, that there is fuch a thing as a God, and that his Existence is very certain. ALG. Bless me! How came you to entertain so wild a Notion? ALC. You know we profess to follow Reason wherever it leads. And in short I have been reasoned into it. LYS. Reafoned? You shou'd say amused with Words, bewildered with Sophistry. EUPH. Have you a mind to hear the same Reasoning that led Alcipbron and me Step by step, that we may examine whether it be Sophistry or no? LYS. As to that I am very eafy. I guess all that can be faid on that Head.

LYS.

Head. It shall be my Business to help my Friend out, whatever Arguments drew him in. EUPH. Will you admit the Premises and deny the Conclusion? LYS. What if I admit the Conclusion? EUPH. How! will you grant there is a God? LYS. Perhaps I may. EUPH. Then we are agreed. LYS. Perhaps not. EUPH. O Lysicles, you are a fubtle Adverfary. I know not what you wou'd be at. LYS. You must know then, that at bottom the Being of a God is a Point in it felf of small consequence, and a Man may make this Concession without yielding much. The great Point is what Sense the word God is to be taken in. The very Epicureans allowed the Being of Gods; but then they were indolent Gods, unconcerned with Human Affairs. Hobbes allowed a corporeal God; and Spinosa held the Universe to be God. And yet no body doubts they were staunch Freethinkers. I cou'd wish indeed the word God were quite omitted, because in most minds it is coupled with a fort of superstitious Awe, the very Root of all Religion. I shall not, nevertheless, be much disturbed though the name be retained, and the Being of a God allowed in any Sense but that of a Mind, which knows all things, and beholds Human Actions, like some Judge or Magistrate with infinite Observation and Intelligence. The Belief of a God in this Sense fills a Man's Mind with Scruples, lays him under Constraints and imbitters his very Being: But in another Sense, it may be attended with no great ill Consequence. This I know was the Opinion of our great Diagoras, who told me he wou'd never have been at the pains, to find out a Demonstration that there was no God, if the received Notion of God and been the same with that of some Fathers and Schoolmen. EUPH. Pray what was that?

XVII. LYS. You must know, Diagoras, a Man of much reading and inquiry, had discovered that once upon a time, the most profound and speculative Divines finding it impossible to reconcile the Attributes of God, taken in the common Sense. or in any known Sense, with Human Reason, and the Appearance of things, taught the words Knowledge, Wisdom, Goodness, and such like, when spoken of the Deity, must be understood in a quite different Sense, from what they signified in the vulgar Acceptation, or from any thing that we can form a Notion of, or conceive. Hence, whatever Objections might be made against the Attributes of God they eafily folved, by denying those Attributes belonged to God, in this or any known particular Sense or Notion; which was the same thing as to deny that they belonged to him at all. And thus denying the Attributes of God they in effect deny his Being, though perhaps they were not aware of it. Suppose, for instance, a Man shou'd object, that future Contingencies were inconfistent with the Fore-knowledge of God, because it is repugnant that certain Knowledge shou'd be of an uncertain thing: it was a ready and an eafy answer to say, that this may be true, with respect to Knowledge taken in the common Sense. or in any Sense that we can possibly form any Notion of; but that there wou'd not appear the same Inconfistency, between the contingent Nature of Things and Divine Foreknowledge, taken to fignify fomewhat that we know nothing of, which in God fupplies the place of what we understand by Knowledge; from which it differs not in the quantity or Degree of Perfection, but altogether, and in kind, as Light doth from Sound; and even more, fince these agree in that they are both Senfations: whereas Knowledge in God hath no fort of Refemblance or Agreement with any Notion, that

The like that Man can frame of Knowledge. may be faid of all the other Attributes, which indeed may by this means be equally reconciled with every thing or with nothing: But all Men who think must needs see, this is cutting knots and not untying them. For how are things reconciled with the Divine Attributes, when these Attributes themfelves are in every intelligible Sense denied; and confequently the very Notion of God taken away, and nothing left but the Name, without any meaning annexed to it? In short, the Belief that there is an unknown Subject of Attributes absolutely unknown is a very innocent Doctrine; which the acute Diagoras well faw, and was therefore wonder-

fully delighted with this System,

XVIII. For, faid he, if this cou'd once make its way and obtain in the World, there wou'd be an end of all natural and rational Religion, which is the Basis both of the Jewish and the Christian: for he who comes to God, or enters himfelf in the Church of God, must first believe that there is a God in some intelligible Sense; and not only that there is fomething in general without any proper Notion, though never fo inadequate, of any of its Qualities or Attributes for this may be Fate, or Chaos, or Plastic Nature, or any thing else as well as God. Nor will it avail to fay, there is fomething in this unknown Being analogous to Knowledge and Goodness: that is to say, which produceth those Effects which we cou'd not conceive to be produced by Men in any Degree, without Knowledge and Goodness. For this is in Fact to give up the Point in dispute between Theists and Atheists, the Question having always been, not whether there was a Principle, (which Point was allowed by all Philosophers as well before as fince Anaxagoras) but whether this Principle was a vec, a thinking intelligent Being: That is to fay, whether

whether that Order and Beauty and Use, visible in Natural Effects, cou'd be produced by any thing but a Mind or Intelligence, in the proper Sense of the Word; and whether there must not be true, real, and proper Knowledge in the first Cause. We will therefore acknowledge, that all those natural Effects which are vulgarly ascribed to Knowledge and Wisdom, proceed from a Being in which there is, properly speaking, no Knowledge or Wisdom at all, but only something else, which, in reality, is the Cause of those things which Men, for want of knowing better, ascribe to what they call Knowledge and Wisdom and Under-You wonder perhaps to hear a Man standing. of Pleasure, who diverts himself as I do, philosophize at this rate. But you shou'd consider that much is to be got by conversing with ingenious Men, which is a short way to Knowledge, that faves a Man the drudgery of Reading and Thinking. And now we have granted to you that there is a God in this indefinite Sense, I wou'd fain fee what use you can make of this Concession. You cannot argue from unknown Attributes, or which is the fame thing, from Attributes in an unknown Senfe. You cannot prove, that God is to be loved for his Goodness, or feared for his Justice, or respected for his Knowledge: All which Confequences, we own, wou'd follow from those Attributes admitted in an intelligible Senfe. But we deny, that those or any other Confequences can be drawn from Attributes admitted in no particular Sense, or in a Sense which none of us understand. Since therefore nothing can be inferred from such an Account of God, about Conscience, or Worship, or Religion, you may e'en make the best of it; and, not to be singular, we will use the Name too, and so at once there is an end of Atheism. EUPH. This AcTHE MINUTE Dial. IV. count of the Deity is new to me. I do not like it, and therefore shall leave it to be maintain'd by those who do.

XIX. CRI. It is not new to me. I remember not long fince to have heard a Minute Philosopher triumph upon this very point; which put me on inquiring what Foundation there was for it in the Fathers or Schoolmen. And, for ought that I can find, it owes its Original to those Writings, which have been published under the Name of Dionyfius the Areopagite. The Author of which, it must be owned, hath written upon the Divine Attributes in a very fingular Style. In his Treatife of the Coelestial Hierarchy * he faith, that God is fomething above all Effence and Life, ບໍ່ກະດຸ ກລັດລາ ຮັດເລາ ນ ζωήν; and again in his Treatise of the Divine Names +, that he is above all Wisdom and Understanding, into maoan σοφίαι κο σύνες ιν, ineffable and innominable, agentos & avoropos; the Wifdom of God he terms an unreasonable, unintelligent, and foolish Wisdom; The aloyor w aver w mupar σοφίαν But then the Reason he gives, for expresing himself in this strange manner, is, that the Divine Wisdom is the Cause of all Reason, Wisdom, and Understanding, and therein are contained the Treasures of all Wisdom and Knowledge. He calls God ὑπέρσοφον and ὑπέρζως; as if Wisdom and Life were Words not worthy to express the Divine Perfections: And he adds, that the Attributes unintelligent and unperceiving must be afcribed to the Divinity, not xar' Exact is by way of Defect, but xab' varepoxiv by way of Eminency; which he explains by our giving the Name of Darkness to Light inaccessible. And, notwithstanding the Harshness of his Expressions in some Places, he affirms over and over in others, that God knows all Things; not that he is beholden to the Crea-

tures

^{*} De Hierarch. Cælest. c. 2. + De Nom. Div. c. 7.

tures for his Knowledge, but by knowing himfelf, from whom they all derive their Being, and in whom they are contained as in their Cause. It was late before these Writings appear to have been known in the World; and although they obtained Credit during the Age of the Schoolmen, yet fince critical Learning hath been cultivated they have lost their Credit, and are at this Day given up for spurious, as containing several evident Marks of much later Date than the Age of Dionyfius. Upon the whole, although this Method of growing in Expression, and dwindling in Notion, of clearing up Doubts by Nonfense, and avoiding Difficulties by running into affected Contradictions, may perhaps proceed from a well-meant Zeal; yet it appears not to be according to Knowledge, and instead of reconciling Atheists to the Truth, hath, I doubt, a Tendency to confirm them in their own Persuasion. It shou'd seem, therefore, very weak and rash in a Christian to adopt this harsh Language of an Apocryphal Writer, preferably to that of the Holy Scriptures. I remember, indeed, to have read of a certain Philosopher, who lived fome Centuries ago, that used to fay, if these supposed Works of Dionysius had been known to the Primitive Fathers, they wou'd have furnished them admirable Weapons against the Hereticks, and wou'd have faved a World of Pains. But the Event fince their Discovery hath by no means confirmed his Opinion. It must be owned, the celebrated Picus of Mirandula, among his Nine Hundred Conclusions (which that Prince being very young, proposed to maintain by public Disputation at Rome) hath this for one; to wit, that it is more improper to fay of God, he is an Intellect or Intelligent Being, than to fay of a reasonable Soul that it is an Angel: Which Doctrine it feems was not relished. And Picus, when he comes to defend M

166 THE MINUTE defend it, supports himself altogether by the Example and Authority of Dionysius, and in effect explains it away into a meer verbal Difference, affirming, that neither Dionysius nor himself ever meant to deprive God of Knowledge, or to deny that he knows all Things: But that, as Reason is of kind peculiar to Man, so by Intellection he understands a kind or manner of Knowing peculiar to Angels: And that the Knowledge, which is in God, is more above the Intellection of Angels, than Angel is above Man. He adds that, as his Tenet confifts with admitting the most perfect Knowledge in God, fo he wou'd by no means be understood to exclude from the Deity Intellection itself, taken in the common or general Sense, but only that peculiar fort of Intellection proper to Angels, which he thinks ought not to be attributed to God any more than Human Reason *. Picus, therefore, though he speaks as the Apocryphal Dionysius, yet when he explains himself, it is evident he speaks like other Men. And although the forementioned Books of the Cœlestial Hierarchy and of the Divine Names, being attributed to a Saint and Martyr of the Apostolical Age, were respected by the Schoolmen, yet it is certain they rejected or foftened his harsh Expresfions, and explained away or reduced his Doctrine to the received Notions taken from Holy Scripture, and the Light of Nature.

XX. Thomas Aquinas expresseth his Sense of this Point in the following manner. All Perfections, saith he, derived from God to the Creatures are in a certain higher Sense, or (as the Schoolmen term it) eminently in God. Whenever, therefore, a Name borrowed from any Perfection in the Creature is attributed to God, we must exclude from its Signification every thing that be-

longs

^{*} Pic. Mirand. in Apolog. p. 155. Ed. Bal.

longs to the imperfect Manner, wherein that Attribute is found in the Creature. Whence he concludes, that Knowledge in God is not an Habit, but a pure A&*. And again the same Doctor observes, that our Intellect gets its Notions of all forts of Perfections from the Creatures, and that as it apprehends those Perfections, so it signifies them by Names. Therefore, faith he, in attributing these Names to God, we are to consider two Things; first, The Perfections themselves as Goodness, Life, and the like, which are properly in God; and, fecondly, The Manner which is peculiar to the Creature, and cannot, strictly and properly fpeaking, be faid to agree to the Creator t. And although Suarez, with other School. men, teacheth, that the Mind of Man conceiveth Knowledge and Will to be in God as Faculties or Operations, by Analogy only to created Beings: yet he gives it plainly as his Opinion, that when Knowledge is faid not to be properly in God, it must be understood in a Sense including Imperfection, fuch as discursive Knowledge, or the like imperfect kind found in the Creatures: And that, June none of those Impersections in the Knowledge of the Men or Angels belonging to the formal Notion , ... of Knowledge, or to Knowledge as fuch, it will not thence follow that Knowledge, in its proper formal Sense, may not be attributed to God: And of Knowledge taken in general for the clear evident understanding of all Truth, he expresly affirms that it is in God, and that this was never denied by any Philosopher who believed a God t. It was, indeed, a current Opinion in the Schools, that even Being itself shou'd be attributed analogically to God and the Creatures. That is, they

* Sum, Theolog. p. 1. Quest. 14. Art. 1.

M 2

† Ibid. Quest. 13. Art. 3.

[‡] Suarez Disp. Metaph. Tom. 2. Disp. 30. Sect. 15.

held that God, the supreme, independent, selforiginate Cause and Source of all Beings, must not be supposed to exist in the same Sense with created Beings, not that he exists less truly, properly, or formally than they, but only because he exists

in a more eminent and perfect Manner.

XXI. But to prevent any Man's being led, by mistaking the Scholastic Use of the Terms Analogy and Analogical, into an Opinion that we cannot frame in any Degree, a true and proper Notion of Attributes applied by Analogy, or, in the School Phrase, predicated analogically, it may not be amiss to inquire into the true Sense and Meaning of those Words. Every one knows, that Analogy is a Greek Word used by Mathematicians, to fignify a Similitude of Proportions. For Inftance, when we observe that Two is to Six, as Three is to Nine, this Similitude or Equality of Proportion is termed Analogy. And although Proportion strictly fignifies the Habitude or Relation of one Quantity to another, yet, in a loofer and translated Sense, it hath been applied to fignify every other Habitude; and confequently the Term Analogy comes to fignify all Similitude of Relations. or Habitudes whatfoever. Hence, the Schoolmen tell us there is Analogy between Intellect and Sight; forafmuch as Intellect is to the Mind, what Sight is to the Body. And that he who governs the State is analogous to him who steers a Ship. Hence a Prince is analogically stiled a Pilot, being to the State as a Pilot is to his Vessel *. For the farther clearing of this Point it is to be observed, that a two-fold Analogy is distinguished by the Schoolmen, metaphorical and proper. Of the first Kind there are frequent Instances in Holy Scripture, attributing Human Parts and Passions to God. When he is represented as having a Finger,

^{*} Vide Cajetan. de Nom. Analog. c. 3.

Finger, an Eye, or an Ear, when he is faid to repent, to be angry, or grieved, every one fees the Analogy is meerly metaphorical. Because those Parts and Passions, taken in the proper Signification, must in every Degree necessarily, and from the formal Nature of the Thing, include When therefore it is faid, the Imperfection. Finger of God appears in this or that Event, Men of common Sense mean no more, but that it is as truly ascribed to God, as the Works wrought by Human Fingers are to Man: and fo of the rest. But the case is different, when Wisdom and Knowledge are attributed to God. Passions and Senses as fuch imply Defect; but in Knowledge fimply, or as fuch, there is no Defect. Knowledge therefore, in the proper formal meaning of the Word. may be attributed to God proportionably, that is preferving a Proportion to the infinite Nature of God. We may fay, therefore, that as God is infinitely above Man, so is the Knowledge of God infinitely above the Knowledge of Man, and this is what Cajetan calls Analogia proprie facta. And after this same Analogy, we must understand all those Attributes to belong to the Deity, which in themselves simply, and as such, denote Perfection. We may therefore confistently with what hath been premised, affirm that all sorts of Persection. which we can conceive in a finite Spirit, are in God, but without any of that all y which is found in the Creatures. This Doctrine therefore of Analogical Perfections in God, or our knowing God by Analogy, feems very much mifunderstood and misapplied by those who wou'd infer from thence, that we cannot frame any direct or proper Notion, though never so inadequate, of Knowledge or Wisdom, as they are in the Deity, or understand any more of them than one born blind can of Light and Colours.

0/1

M 3

XXII.

XXII. And now, Gentlemen, it may be expected I shou'd ask your Pardon, for having dwelt so long on a point of Metaphysics, and introduced fuch unpolished and unfashionable Writers as the Schoolmen into good Company; but as Lyficles. gave the occasion, I leave him to answer for it. LYS. I never dreamt of this dry Differtation. But, if I have been the occasion of discussing these Scholastic Points, by my unluckily mentioning the Schoolmen, it was my first fault of the kind, and I promise it shall be the last. The meddling with crabbed Authors of any fort is none of my tafte. I grant one meets now and then with a good Notion in what we call dry Writers, fuch an one for example as this I was speaking of, which I must own ftruck my Fancy. But then for these we have fuch as Prodicus or Diagoras, who look into obfolete Books, and fave the rest of us that trouble. CRI. So you pin your Faith upon them. LYS. It is only for some odd Opinions, and matters of Fact, and critical Points. Besides, we know the Men to whom we give credit: They are judicious and honest, and have no end to serve but Truth. And I am confident some Author or other has maintained the forementioned Notion in the fame Sense as Diagoras related it. CRI. That may be. But it never was a received Notion, and never will, fo long as Men believe a God; the same Arguments that prove a first Cause proving an intelligent Cause: Intelligent, I say, in the proper Sense: Wise and Good in the true and formal Acceptation of the Words. Otherwise it is evident. that every Syllogism brought to prove those Attributes, or (which is the fame thing) to prove the Being of a God, will be found to confift of four terms, and confequently can conclude nothing. But for your part, Alcipbron, you have been fully convinced, that God is a thinking intelligent Being Being in the same sense with other Spirits, though not in the same impersect manner or degree.

XXIII. ALC. And yet I am not without my Scruples: For with Knowledge you infer Wifdom, and with Wisdom Goodness. But how is it possible, to conceive God so good, and Man so wicked? It may perhaps with fome Colour be alledged, that a little foft shadowing of Evil sets off the bright and luminous parts of the Creation. and fo contributes to the Beauty of the whole Piece: But, for Blots fo large and fo black it is impossible to account by that Principle. That there shou'd be so much Vice and so little Virtue upon Earth, and that the Laws of God's Kingdom shou'd be so ill observed by his Subjects, is what can never be reconciled with that furpaffing Wisdom and Goodness of the supreme Monarch. EUPH. Tell me, Alcipbron, wou'd you argue that a State was ill administred, or judge of the manners of its Citizens, by the Disorders committed in the Goal or Dungeon? ALC. I wou'd not. EUPH. And for ought we know, this Spot with the few Sinners on it, bears no greater Proportion to the Universe of Intelligences, than a Dungeon to a Kingdom. It feems we are led not only by Revelation but by common Sense, observing and inferring from the Analogy of visible Things, to conclude there are innumerable Orders of intelligent Beings more happy and more perfect than Man, whose Life is but a Span, and whose place this earthly Globe is but a Point, in respect of the whole System of God's Creation. We are dazzled indeed with the Glory and Grandeur of Things here below, because we know no better. But I am apt to think, if we knew what it was to be an Angel for one hour, we shou'd return to this World, though it were to fit on the brightest Throne in it, with vaftly more loathing and reluct-

M 4

172 THE MINUTE Dial. IV.

ance, than we wou'd now descend into a loath-

fome Dungeon or Sepulchre.

XXIV. CRI. To me it feems natural, that fuch a weak passionate and short-sighted Creature as Man, shou'd be ever liable to Scruples of one kind or other. But, as this fame Creature is apt to be over positive in judging, and over hasty in concluding, it falls out, that these Difficulties and Scruples about God's Conduct are made Objections to his Being. And so Men come to argue from their own Defects against the Divine Perfections. And, as the Views and Humours of Men are different and often opposite, you may fometimes fee them deduce the fame atheistical Conclusion from contrary Premises. I knew an Instance of this, in two Minute Philosophers of my Acquaintance, who used to argue each from his own Temper against a Providence. One of them, a Man of a choleric and vindictive Spirit, faid he cou'd not believe a Providence, because London was not fwallowed up or confumed by Fire from Heaven, the Streets being as he faid full of People, who shew no other Belief or Worship of God. but perpetually praying that he wou'd damn, rot, fink, and confound them. The other, being of an indolent and eafy Temper, concluded there cou'd be no fuch thing as a Providence, for that a Being of confummate Wisdom must needs employ himself better, than in minding the Prayers, and Actions, and little Interests of Mankind. ALC. After all, if God have no Paffions, how can it be true that Vengeance is his? Or how can he be faid to be jealous of his Glory? CRI. We believe that God executes Vengeance without Revenge, and is jealous without Weakness, just as the mind of Man fees without Eyes, and apprehends without Hands.

. XXV. CRL To put a Period to this Discourse,

we will grant, there is a God in this dispassionate Sense; but what then? What hath this to do with Religion or Divine Worship? To what purpose, are all these Prayers, and Praises, and Thanksgivings, and Singing of Pfalms, which the foolish Vulgar call ferving God? What fense or use or end is there in all these things? CRI. We worship God, we praise and pray to him: not because we think that he is proud of our Worship, or fond of our Praise or Prayers, and affected with them as Mankind are, or that all our Service can contribute in the least Degree to his Happiness or Good: But because it is good for us, to be so disposed towards God: because it is just and right and fuitable to the Nature of Things, and becoming the Relation we stand in to our supreme Lord and Governor. ALC. If it be good for us to worship God; it shou'd seem that the Christian Religion, which pretends to teach Men the Knowledge and Worship of God, was of some use and benefit to Mankind. CRI. Doubtless. ALC. If this can be made appear, I shall own myself very much mistaken. CRI. It is now near Dinner time. Wherefore if you please, we will put an end to this Conversation for the present, and to-morrow morning resume our Subject.

ENCYCOCASCAPHA DOLTO TELES

The FIFTH DIALOGUE.

I. Minute Philosophers join in the Cry, and follow the Scent of others. II. Worship prescribed by the Christian Religion suitable to God and Man. III. Power and Instuence of the Druids. IV. Excellency and Usefulness of the Christian Religion. V. It ennobles Mankind and makes them happy. VI. Religion neither Biggotry nor Superstition. VII. Physicians 174 THE MINUTE Dial. V.

sicians and Physic for the Soul. VIII. Character of the Clergy. IX. Natural Religion and Human Reason not to be disparaged. X. Tendency and Use of the Gentile Religion. XI. Good Effects of Christianity. XII. Englishmen compared with ancient Greeks and Romans. XIII. The Modern Practice of Duelling. XIV. Character of the old Romans, how to be formed. XV. Genuine Fruits of the Gospel. XVI. Wars and Factions not an Effect of the Christian Religion. XVII. Civil Rage and Massacres in Greece and Rome. XVIII. Virtue of ancient Greeks. XIX. Quarrels of Polemical Divines. XX. Tyranny, Ufurpation, Sopbistry of Ecclesiastics. XXI. The Universities censured. XXII. Divine Writings of a certain modern Critic. XXIII. Learning the Effeet of Religion. XXIV. Barbarism of the Schools. XXV. Restauration of Learning and polite Arts, to whom owing. XXVI. Prejudice and Ingratitude of Minute Philosophers. XXVII. Their Pretenfions and Conduct inconfistent. XXVIII. Men and Brutes compared with respect to Religion. XXIX. Christianity the only Means to establish Natural Religion. XXX. Free-thinkers mistake their Talents; bave a strong Imagination. XXXI. Tithes and Church-lands. XXXII. Men distinguished from Human Creatures. XXXIII. Distribution of Mankind into Birds, Beafts, and Fishes. XXXIV. Plea for Reason allowed, but Unfairness taxed. XXXV. Freedom a Bleffing or a Curse as it is used. XXXVI. Priestcraft not the reigning Evil.

I. WE amused ourselves the next Day every one to his Fancy, till Nine of the Clock, when Word was brought that the Tea-table was set in the Library, which is a Gallery on a Ground-floor, with an arched Door at one End opening

Dial. V.

17,5

into a Walk of Limes; where, as foon as we had drank Tea, we were tempted by fine Weather to take a Walk which led us to a small Mount of easy Ascent, on the Top whereof we found a Seat under a spreading Tree. Here we had a Prospest on one hand of a narrow Bay or Creek of the Sea. inclosed on either Side by a Coast beautified with Rocks and Woods, and green Banks and Farmhouses. At the End of the Bay was a small Town placed upon the Slope of a Hill, which from the Advantage of its Situation made a confiderable Fi-Several Fishing-boats and Lighters gliding up and down on a Surface as fmooth and bright as Glass enlivened the Prospect. On the other Side we looked down on green Pastures, Flocks, and Herds, basking beneath in Sun-shine, while we in our fuperior Situation enjoy'd the Freshness . of Air and Shade. Here we felt that fort of joyful Instinct which a rural Scene and fine Weather inspire; and proposed no small Pleasure, in refurning and continuing our Conference without Interruption till Dinner: But we had hardly feated ourselves, and looked about us, when we saw a Fox run by the Foot of our Mount into an adjacent Thicket. A few Minutes after, we heard a confused Noise of the opening of Hounds, the winding of Horns, and the roaring of Country Squires. While our Attention was suspended by this Event, a Servant came running out of Breath and told Crito, that his Neighbour Ctefippus, a Squire of Note, was fallen from his Horse attempting to leap over a Hedge, and brought into the Hall, where he lay for dead. Upon which we all rose and walked hastily to the House, where we found Ctesippus just come to himself, in the midst of half a dozen Sun-burnt Squires in Frocks and fhort Wigs and Jockey-Boots. Being asked how he did? he answered it was only a broken

Rib. With some Difficulty Crito persuaded him to lie on a Bed till the Chirurgeon came. Fox-hunters, having been up early at their Sport were eager for Dinner, which was accordingly hastened. They passed the Afternoon in a loud rustic Mirth, gave Proof of their Religion and Loyalty by the Healths they drank, talked of Hounds and Horses and Elections and Country Affairs till the Chirurgeon, who had been employed about Ctestppus, defired he might be put into Crito's Coach, and fent home, having refused to flay all Night. Our Guests being gone, we reposed ourselves after the Fatigue of this tumultuous Visit, and next Morning assembled again at the Seat on the Mount. Now Lysicles, being a nice Man, and a bel esprit, had an infinite Contempt for the rough Manners and Conversation of Fox-hunters, and cou'd not reflect with Patience that he had loft, as he called it, fo many Hours in their Company. I flattered myfelf, faid he, that there had been none of this Species remaining among us: Strange that Men shou'd be diverted with fuch uncouth Noise and Hurry, or find Pleasure in the Society of Dogs and Horses! How much more elegant are the Diversions of the Town! There feems, replied Euphranor, to be fome Refemblance between Fox-hunters and Freethinkers; the former exerting their animal Faculties in pursuit of Game, as you Gentlemen employ your Intellectuals in the pursuit of Truth. The kind of Amusement is the same, although the Object be different. LYS. I had rather be compared to any Brute upon Earth than a rational Brute. CRI. You wou'd then have been less displeased with my Friend Pythocles, whom I have heard compare the common fort of Minute Philosophers, not to the Hunters, but the Hounds. For, faid he, you shall often fee among the Dogs a loud

a loud Babler, with a bad Nose, lead the unskilful part of the pack, who join all in his Cry without following any Scent of their own, any more than the Herd of Free-thinkers follow their own Reason.

II. But Pythocles was a blunt Marr, and must never have known fuch Reasoners among them as you Gentlemen, who can fit fo long at an Argument, dispute every Inch of Ground, and yet know when to make a reasonable Concession. LYS. I don't know how it comes to pass, but methinks Alcipbron makes Concessions for himself and me For my own part, I am not altogether of fuch a yielding Temper: But yet I don't care to be fingular neither. CRI. Truly, Alcipbron, when I consider where we are got, and how far we are agreed, I conceive it probable we may agree altogether in the end. You have granted that a Life of Virtue is upon all Accounts eligible, as most conducive both to the general and particular Good of Mankind: And you allow, that the Beauty of Virtue alone is not a fufficient Motive with Mankind to the Practice of it. This led you to acknowledge, that the Belief of a God wou'd be very useful in the World; and that consequently you shou'd be disposed to admit any reasonable Proof of his Being: Which Point hath been proved, and you have admitted the Proof. If then we admit a Divinity, why not Divine Worship? And if Worship, why not Religion to teach this Worship? And if a Religion, why not the Chriflian, if a better cannot be affigned, and it be already established by the Laws of our Country, and handed down to us from our Fore-fathers? Shall we believe a God, and not pray to him for future Benefits nor thank him for the past? Neither trust in his Protection, nor love his Goodness, nor praise his Wisdom, nor adore his Power? And if

1

3

3

Way more suitable to the dignity of God or Man, than is prescribed by the Christian Religion? ALC. I am not perhaps altogether sure that Religion must be absolutely bad for the Public: But I cannot bear to see Policy and Religion walk hand in hand: I do not like to see Human Rights attached to the Divine: I am for no Pontifex Maximus, such as in ancient or in modern Rome: No High Priest, as in Judea: No Royal Priests, as in Egypt and Sparta: No such thing as Dairos of Japar, or Lamas

of Tartary.

III. I knew a late witty Gentleman of our Sect. who was a great Admirer of the ancient Druids. He had a mortal Antipathy to the present established Religion, but used to say he shou'd like well to fee the Druids and their Religion restored, as it anciently flourished in Gaul and Britain; for it wou'd be right enough that there shou'd be a Number of contemplative Men fet apart to preserve 2 Knowledge of Arts and Sciences, to educate Youth, and teach Men the Immortality of the Soul and the moral Virtues. Such, faid he, were the Druids of old, and I shou'd be glad to see them once more established among us. CRI. How wou'd you like, Alcipbron, that Priests shou'd have Power to decide all Controversies, adjudge Property, distribute Rewards and Punishments, that all who did not acquiesce in their Decrees shou'd be excommunicated, held in Abhorrence, excluded from all Honours and Privileges, and deprived of the common Benefit of the Laws; and that now and then, a Number of Lay-men shou'd be crammed together in a Wicker-idol, and burnt for an Offering to their Pagan Gods? How shou'd you like living under fuch Priests and fuch a Religion? ALC. Not at all. Such a Situation wou'd by no means agree with Free-thinkers. CRI. And

yet such were the Druids, and such their Religion, if we may trust Casar's Account of them . LYS. I am now convinced more than ever, there ought to be no fuch Thing as an established Religion of any kind. Certainly all the Nations of the World have been hitherto out of their Wits. Even the Athenians themselves, the wifest and freest People upon Earth, had, I know not what, foolish Attachment to their established Church, They offered it feems a Talent as a Reward to whoever shou'd kill Diagoras the Melian, a Free-thinker of those Times who derided their Mysteries: And Protagoras, another of the same Turn, narrowly escaped being put to Death, for having wrote fomething that feemed to contradict their received Notions of the Gods. Such was the Treatment our generous Sect met with at Athens. And I make no doubt, but these Druids wou'd have facrificed many a Holocaust of Free-thinkers. I wou'd not give a fingle Farthing to exchange one Religion for another. Away with all together, Root and Branch, or you had as good do nothing. No Druids or Priests of any fort for me: I see no occasion for any of them.

IV. EUPH. What Lysicles saith puts me in mind of the Close of our last Conference, wherein it was agreed, in the following to resume the Point we were then entered upon, to wit, the Use and Benefit of the Christian Religion, which Alciphron expected Crito shou'd make appear. CRI. I am the readier to undertake this Point, because I conceive it to be no difficult one, and that one great Mark of the Truth of Chiristianity is in my mind, its Tendency to do good, which seems the North Star to conduct our Judgment in moral Matters, and in all Things of a practic Nature? Moral or practical Truths being ever connected with univer-

^{*} De Bello Gallico, 1. 6.

Dial. V. THE MINUTE 180 But to judge rightly of this Matter, fal Benefit. we shou'd endeavour to act like Lysicles upon another Occasion, taking into our View the Sum of Things, and confidering Principles as branched forth into consequences to the utmost Extent we are able. We are not fo much to regard the Humour or Caprice, or Diffresses of a few idle Men, whose Conceit may be offended, though their Conscience cannot be wounded; but fairly to confider the true Interest of Individuals as well as of Human Society. Now the Christian Religion confidered as a Fountain of Light, and Joy, and Peace, as a Source of Faith, and Hope, and Charity, (and that it is so will be evident to whoever takes his Notion of it from the Gospel) must needs be a Principle of Happiness and Virtue. And he who fees not, that the destroying Principles of good Actions must destroy good Actions, sees nothing: And he who, feeing this, shall yet persist to do it, if he be not wicked, who is?

V. To me it feems the Man can fee neither deep nor far, who is not fenfible of his own Mifery, Sinfulness, and Dependence; who doth not perceive, that this present World is not designed or adapted to make rational Souls happy; who wou'd not be glad of getting into a better State, and who wou'd not be overjoy'd to find, that the Road leading thither was the Love of God and Man, the practifing every Virtue, the living reasonably while we are here on Earth, proportioning our Esteem to the Value of things, and so using this World as not to abuse it, for this is what Christianity requires. It neither injoyns the Nastiness of the Cynic, nor the Infenfibility of the Stoic. Can there be a higher Ambition than to overcome the World, or a Wifer than to subdue our selves, or a more comfortable Doctrine than the Remission of Sins, or a more joyful Prospect than that of

having

know

having our base Nature renewed and assimilated to the Deity, our being made Fellow-citizens with Angels, and Sons of God? Did ever Pythagoreans, or Platonists, or Stoics, even in Idea or in Wish. propose to the Mind of Man purer Means or a nobler End? How great a Share of Happiness depends upon Hope! How totally is this extinguished by the Minute Philosophy! On the other hand, how is it cherished and raised by the Gospel! Let any Man who thinks in earnest but consider these Things, and then fay which he thinks deferveth best of Mankind, he who recommends, or he who runs down Christianity? Which he thinks likelier to lead a happy Life, to be an hopeful Son, an honest Dealer, a worthy Patriot, He who fincerely believes the Gospel, or he who believes not one Title of it? He who aims at being a Child of God, or He who is contented to be thought, and to be, one of Epicurus's Hogs? And in Fact do but scan the Characters, and observe the Behaviour of the common fort of Men on both fides: Obferve and fay which live most agreeably to the Dictates of Reason? How Things shou'd be, the Reafon is plain; how they are, I appeal to Fact.

VI. ALC. It is wonderful to observe how Things change Appearance, as they are viewed in different Lights, or by different Eyes. The Picture, Crito, that I form of Religion is very unlike yours, when I consider how it unmans the Soul, filling it with absurd Reveries and slavish Fears; how it extinguishes the gentle Passions, inspiring a Spirit of Malice, and Rage, and Persecution: When I behold bitter Resentments and unholy Wrath in those very Men, who preach up Meekness and Charity to others. CRI. It is very possible, that Gentlemen of your Sect may think Religion a Subject beneath their Attention; but yet it seems that whoever sets up for opposing any Doctrine, shou'd

know what it is he disputes against. Know then, that Religion is the virtuous Mean between Incredulity and Superstition. We do not therefore contend for superstitious Follies, or for the Rage of Bigots. What we plead for is Religion against Profaneness, Law against Confusion, Virtue against Vice, the Hope of a Christian against the Despondency of an Atheist. I will not justify bitter Resentments and unholy Wrath in any Man, much less in a Christian, and least of all in a Clergyman. But if fallies of Human Paffion shou'd fometimes appear even in the best, it will not furprize any one who reflects on the Sarcasms and ill Manners with which they are treated by the Minute Philosophers. For as Cicero somewhere observes, Habet quendam aculeum Contumelia, quem pati prudentes ac viri boni difficillime poffunt. But although you might fometimes observe particular Persons, professing themselves Christians, run into faulty Extremes of any kind through Passion and Infirmity, while Infidels of a more calm and dispassionate Temper shall perhaps behave better. Yet these natural Tendencies on either fide prove nothing, either in favour of Infidel Principles, or against Christian. If a Believer doth Evil it is owing to the Man not to his Belief. And if an Infidel doth good it is owing to the Man and not to his Infidelity.

VII. LYS. To cut this Matter short, I shall borrow an Allusion to Physic, which one of you made use of against our Sect. It will not be denied, that the Clergy pass for Physicians of the Soul, and that Religion is a fort of Medicine which they deal in and administer. If then Souls in great numbers are diseased and lost, how can we think the Physician skilful or his Physic good? It is a common Complaint, that Vice increases, and Men grow daily more and more wicked. If a Shepherd's Flock be diseased or unfound, who is

who

to blame but the Shepherd, for neglecting or not knowing how to cure them? a Fig therefore for fuch Shepherds, fuch Physic, and fuch Physicians. who like other Mountebanks, with great Gravity and elaborate Harangues put off their Pills to the People, who are never the better for them. EUPH. Nothing feems more reasonable than this Remark. that Men shou'd judge of a Physician, and his Physic by its Effect on the Sick. But Pray, Lysicles, wou'd you judge of a Physician by those Sick, who take his Physic and follow his Prescriptions. or by those who do not? LYS. Doubtless by those who do. EUPH. What shall we say then, if great numbers refuse to take the Physic, or instead of it take poison of a direct contrary Nature prescribed by others who make it their Business to discredit the Physician and his Medicines, to hinder Men from using them, and to destroy their Effect by Drugs of their own? Shall the Phylician be blamed for the miscarriage of those People? LYS. By no means. EUPH. By a parity of Reason shou'd it not follow, that the Tendency of religious Doctrines ought to be judged of by the Effects which they produce not upon all who hear them, but upon those only who receive or believe them? LYS. It feems fo. EUPH. Therefore to proceed fairly, shall we not judge of the Effects of Religion by the Religious, of Faith by Believers, of Christianity by Christians?

VIII. LTS. But I doubt these sincere Believers are very sew. EUPH. But will it not suffice to justify our Principles, if in proportion to the Numbers which receive them and the degree of Faith with which they are received, they produce good Effects. Perhaps the number of Believers are not so sew as you imagine; and if they were, whose fault is that so much as of those who make it their professed Endeavour to lessen that number? And

N2

who are those but the Minute Philosophers? LYS. I tell you it is owing to the Clergy themselves, to the Wickedness and Corruption of Clergymen. EUPH. And who denies but there may be Minute Philosophers even among the Clergy? CRI. In so numerous a body it is to be prefumed there are Men of all forts. But notwithstanding the cruel Reproaches cast upon that Order by their Enemies. an equal Observer of Men and Things will, if I mistake not, be inclined to think those Reproaches owing as much to other Faults as those of the Clergy, especially if he considers the declamatory manner of those who censure them. EUPH. My Knowledge of the World is too narrow for me to pretend to judge of the Virtue and Merit and liberal Attainments of Men in the feveral Professions. Besides, I shou'd not care for the odious work of Comparison: But I may venture to say, the Clergy of this Country where I live are by no means a difgrace to it: on the Contrary, the People feem much the better for their Example and Doctrine. But supposing the Clergy to be (what all Men certainly are) Sinners and faulty; fuppoling you might fpy out here and there among them even great Crimes and Vices, what can you conclude against the Profession it self from its unworthy Professors, any more than from the Pride, Pedantry, and bad Lives of some Philosophers against Philosophy, or of Lawyers against Law?

IX. It is certainly right to judge of Principles from their Effects, but then we must know them to be Effects of those Principles. It is the very Method I have observed, with respect to Religion and the Minute Philosophy. And I can honestly aver, that I never knew any Man or Family grow worse in proportion as they grew religious: But I have often observed that Minute Philosophy is the worst thing which can get into a Family, the readiest

readiest way to impoverish, divide and disgrace it. ALC. By the same Method of tracing Causes from their Effects. I have made it my Observation, that the Love of Truth, Virtue, and the Happiness of Mankind are spacious Pretexts, but not the inward Principles that fet Divines at work: Else why shou'd they affect to abuse Human Reason, to disparage natural Religion, to traduce the Philofophers as they univerfally do? CRI. Not fo univerfally perhaps as you imagine. A Christian. indeed, is for confining Reason within its due Bounds; and so is every reasonable Man. If we are forbid meddling with unprofitable Questions, vain Philosophy, and Science falsly so called, it cannot be thence inferred, that all Inquiries into profitable Questions, useful Philosophy, and true Science, are unlawful. A Minute Philosopher may indeed impute, and perhaps a weak Brother may imagine those Inferences, but Men of Sense will never make them. God is the common Father of a Lights; and all Knowledge really fuch, whether natural or revealed, is derived from the fame Source of Light and Truth. To amass together Authorities upon fo plain a Point wou'd be needlefs. It must be owned some Mens attributing too much to Human Reason hath, as is natural. made others attribute too little to it. But thus much is generally acknowledged, that there is a natural Religion, which may be discovered and proved by the light of Reason, to those who are capable of fuch Proofs. But it must be withal acknowledged, that Precepts and Oracles from Heaven are incomparably better fuited to popular Improvement and the good of Society, than the Reasonings of Philosophers; and accordingly we do not find, that natural or rational Religion ever became the popular national Religion of any Country.

X. ALC.

X. ALC. It cannot be denied, that in all Heathen Countries there have been received under the colour of Religion, a world of Fables and fuperstitious Rites. But I question whether they were fo abfurd and of fo bad Influence as is vulgarly represented, fince their respective Legislators and Magistrates must, without doubt, have thought them useful. CRI. It were needless to inquire into all the Rites and Notions of the Gentile World. This hath been largely done when it was thought necessary. And whoever thinks it worth while may be easily satisfied about them. But as to the Tendency and Usefulness of the Heathen Religion in general, I beg leave to mention a Remark of St. Augustine's *, who observes that the Heathens in their Religion had no Affemblies for preaching, wherein the People were to be instructed what Duties or Virtues the Gods required, no Place or Means to be taught what Persius + exhorts them to learn.

Disciteque ô miseri, & causas cognoscite rerum, Quid sumus, & quidnam victuri gignimur.

ALC. This is the true Spirit of the Party, never to allow a Grain of Use or Goodness to any thing out of their own Pale: But we have had learned Men who have done Justice to the Religion of the Gentiles. CRI. We do not deny but there was something useful in the old Religions, of Rome and Greece, and some other Pagan Countries. On the contrary, we freely own they produced some good Essects on the People: But then these good Essects were owing to the Truths contained in those salse Religions, the truer therefore the more useful. I believe you will find it a hard Matter to produce any useful Truth, any moral Precept, any salutary Principle or Notion in any Gentile System, either of Religion or Philosophy, which

^{*} De civitate Dei 1. 2. + Sat. 3.

is not comprehended in the Christian, and either enforced by stronger Motives, or supported by better Authority, or carried to a higher Point of Perfection.

XI. ALC. Confequently you wou'd have us think ourselves a finer People than the ancient Greeks or Romans. CRI. If by finer you mean better, perhaps we are; and if we are not, it is not owing to the Christian Religion, but to the want of it. ALC. You fay perhaps we are. I do not pique myself on my reading: But shou'd be very ignorant to be capable of being imposed on in so plain a Point. What! compare Cicero or Brutus to an English Patriot, or Seneca to one of our Parsons! Then that invincible constancy and Vigour of Mind, that difinterested and noble Virtue, that adorable publick Spirit you so much admire, are things in them so well known, and fo different from our Manners, that I know not how to excuse your perhaps. Euphranor, indeed, who passeth his Life in this obfcure Corner, may possibly mistake the Characters of our Times, but you who know the World. how cou'd you be guilty of fuch a Mistake? CRI. O Alcipbron, I wou'd by no means detract from the noble Virtue of ancient Heroes: But I observe those great Men were not the Minute Philosophers of their Times? that the best Principles upon which they acted are common to them with Christians, of whom it would be no difficult Matter to affign many Instances, in every kind of Worth and Virtue, publick or private, equal to the most celebrated of the Ancients. Though perhaps their Story might not have been fo well told, fet off with fuch fine Lights and colourings of Style, or fo vulgarly known and confidered by every Schoolboy. But though it shou'd be granted, that here and there a Greek or Roman Genius, bred up under strict Laws and severe Discipline, animated N 4 to

to public Virtue by Statues, Crowns, Triumphal Arches, and fuch Rewards and Monuments of great Actions, might attain to a Character and Fame beyond other Men, yet this will prove only, that they had more Spirit and lived under a civil Polity more wifely ordered in certain points than ours; Which advantages of Nature and civil Institution will be no Argument for their Religion or against ours. On the contrary, it seems an invincible Proof of the Power and Excellency of the Christian Religion, that, without the help of those civil Institutions and Incentives to Glory, it shou'd be able to inspire a Phlegmatic People with the noblest Sentiments, and foften the rugged Manners of Northern Boors into Gentleness and Humanity: and that these good Qualities shou'd become National, and rife and fall in proportion to the Purity of our Religion, as it approaches to, or recedes from the Plan laid down in the Gospel-

XII. To make a right Judgment of the Effects of the Christian Religion, let us take a survey of the prevailing Notions and Manners of this very Country where we live, and compare them with those of our Heathen Predecessors. ALC. I have heard much of the glorious Light of the Gospel, and shou'd be glad to see some Effects of it in my own dear Country, which, by the bye, is one of the most corrupt and profligate upon Earth, notwithstanding the boasted Purity of our Religion. But it wou'd look mean and diffident, to affect a Comparison with the barbarous Heathen, from whence we drew our Original: If you wou'd do Honour to your Religion, dare to make it with the most renowned Heathens of Antiquity. CRI. It is a common Prejudice, to despise the present and over-rate remote Times and Things. Something of this feems to enter into the Judgments Men make of the Greeks and Romans. For though it

muit

must be allowed, those Nations produced some noble Spirits and great Patterns of Virtue: yet upon the whole, it feems to me they were much inferior in point of real Virtue and good Morals, even to this corrupt and profligate Nation, as you are now pleased to call it in dishonour to our Religion; however you may think fit to characterize it, when you wou'd do honour to the Minute Philosophy. This, I think, will be plain to any one, who shall turn off his Eyes from a few shining Characters, to view the general Manners and Customs of those People. Their insolent treatment of Captives, even of the highest Rank and fofter Sex, their unnatural exposing of their own Children, their bloody Gladiatorian Spectacles, compared with the common Notions of Englishmen. are to me a plain proof, that our Minds are much foftened by Christianity. Cou'd any thing be more unjust, than the condemning a young Lady to the most infamous Punishment and Death for the guilt of her Father, or a whole Family of Slaves, perhaps fome hundreds for a Crime committed by one? Or more Abominable than their Bacchanals and unbridled Lusts of every kind? which, notwithstanding all that has been done by Minute Philosophers to debauch the Nation, and their fuccessful Attempts on some part of it, have not been matched among us, at least not in every circumstance of Impudence and Effrontery. While the Romans were poor, they were temperate; but, as they grew rich, they became luxurious to a degree that is hardly believed or conceived by us. It cannot be denied, the old Roman Spirit was a great one. But it is as certain, there have been numberless Examples of the most resolute and clear Courage in Britons, and in general from a Religious Cause. Upon the whole, it seems an infrance of the greatest Blindness and Ingratitude, that that we do not fee and own the exceeding great Benefits of Christianity, which, to omit higher considerations, hath so visibly softened, polished, and embellished our Manners.

XIII. ALC. O Crito, we are alarmed at Cruelty in a foreign Shape, but over-look it in a familiar one. Else how is it possible that you shou'd not fee the Inhumanity of that barbarous Custom of Duelling, a thing avowed and tolerated and even reputable among us? Or that feeing this, you shou'd suppose our Englishmen of a more gentle disposition than the old Romans, who were altogether Strangers to it? CRI. I will by no means make an Apology for every Goth that walks the Streets, with a determined purpose to murder any Man who shall but spit in his Face, or give him the Lye. Nor do I think the Christian Religion is in the least answerable, for a practice so directly opposite to its Precepts, and which obtains only among the idle part of the Nation, your Men of Fashion; who, instead of Law, Reason or Religion, are governed by Fashion. Be pleased to consider that what may be, and truly is, a most fcandalous reproach to a Christian Country, may be none at all to the Christian Religion: For the Pagan encouraged Men in feveral Vices, but the Christian in none. ALC. Give me leave to obferve, that what you now fay is foreign to the purpose. For the question, at present, is not concerning the respective tendencies of the Pagan and the Christian Religions, but concerning our Manners, as actually compared with those of ancient Heathens, who I aver had no fuch barbarous Cufrom as Duelling. CRI. And I aver that, bad as this is, they had a worfe; and that was Poisoning. By which we have reason to think there were many more Lives destroyed, than by this Gotbic Crime of Duelling: Inafmuch as it extended to

all Ages, Sexes, and Characters, and as its Effects were more fecret and unavoidable; and as it had more Temptations, Interest as well as Passion, to recommend it to wicked Men. And for the Fact, not to waste time, I refer you to the Roman Authors themselves. LYS. It is very true: Duelling is not fo general a Nusance as Poisoning, nor of fo base a Nature. This Crime, if it be a Crime, is in a fair way to keep its ground in spight of the Law and the Gospel. The Clergy never preach against it, because themselves never suffer by it: and the Man of honour must not appear against the means of vindicating Honour. CRI. Though it be remarked by some of your Sect, that the Clergy are not used to preach against Duelling. yet I neither think the Remark itself just, nor the Reason assigned for it. In effect, one half of their Sermons, all that is faid of Charity, Brotherly Love, Forbearance, Meekness, and Forgiving Injuries is directly against this wicked Custom; by which the Clergy themselves are so far from never fuffering, that perhaps they will be found, all things considered, to suffer oftener than other Men. LYS. How do you make this appear? CRL An Observer of Mankind may remark two kinds of Bully, the Fighting and the Tame, both public Nusances, the former (who is the more dangerous Animal, but by much the less common of the two) employs himself wholly and solely against the Laity, while the tame Species exert their Talents upon the Clergy. The Qualities conflituent of this tame Bully are natural-Rudeness joined with a delicate fense of Danger. For, you must know, the force of inbred Insolence and ill Manners is not diminished, though it acquire a new Determination, from the fashionable custom of calling Men to account for their Behaviour. Hence you may often see one of these tame Bullies hies ready to burst with Pride and ill Humour, which he dares not vent till a Parson has come in the way to his Relief. And the Man of Raillery, who wou'd as soon bite off his Tongue, as break a jest on the profession of Arms in the presence of a military Man, shall instantly brighten up, and assume a familiar Air with Religion and the Church before Ecclesiastics. Dorcon, who passeth for a Poltron and stupid in all other Company, and really is so, when he is got among Clergymen, affects a quite opposite Character. And many Dorcons there are, which owe their Wit and Cou-

rage to this Passive Order.

XIV. ALC. But, to return to the point in hand, can you deny, the old Romans were as famous for Justice and Integrity, as Men in these days for the contrary Qualities? CRI. The Character of the Romans is not to be taken from the Sentiments of Tully, or Cato's Actions, or a shining passage here and there in their History, but from the prevailing tenor of their Lives and Notions. Now if they and our modern Britons are weighed in this fame equal balance, you will, if I mistake not, appear to have been prejudiced in favour of the old Romans against your own Country, probably because it professeth Christianity. Whatever instances of Fraud or Injustice may be seen in Christians carry their own censure with them, in the care that is taken to conceal them, and the shame that attends their discovery. There is, even at this day, a fort of Modesty in all our public Councils and Deliberations. And I believe, the boldest of our Minute Philosophers wou'd hardly undertake in a popular Assembly, to propose any thing parallel to the Rape of the Sabines, the most unjust usage of Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus, or the ungrateful treatment of Camillus, which, as a learned Father observes, were instances of Iniquity agreed to by the public body of the Romans And if Rome in her early days were capable of fuch flagrant Injustice, it is most certain she did not mend her Manners, as she grew great in Wealth and Empire, having produced Monsters in every kind of Wickedness, as far exceeding other Men, as they furpassed them in power. I freely acknowledge, the Christian Religion hath not had the same influence upon the Nation, that it wou'd in case it had been always professed in its Purity, and cordially believed by all Men. But I will venture to fay, that if you take the Roman History from one end to the other, and impartially compare it with our own, you will neither find them fo good, nor your Countrymen fo bad as you imagine. On the contrary an indifferent Eye may, I verily think, perceive a vein of Charity and Justice, the effect of Christian Principles, run through the latter, which, though not equally difcernible in all parts, yet discloseth itself sufficiently to make a wide difference upon the whole in spight of the general Appetites and Passions of Human Nature, as well as of the particular hardness and roughness of the block out of which we were hewn. And it is observable (what the Roman Authors themselves do often suggest) that, even their Virtues and magnanimous Actions rose and fell with a fense of Providence, and a future State, and a Philosophy the nearest to the Christian Religion.

XV. Crito having spoke thus, paused. But Alciphron addressing himself to Euphranor and me, said, It is natural for Men, according to their several Educations and Prejudices, to form contrary Judgments upon the same things, which they view in very different lights. Crito, for instance, imagines that none but Salutary Effects proceed from Religion: on the other hand, if you appeal to the general

general Experience and Observation of other Men, you shall find it grown into a Proverb that Religion is the root of evil.

Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum.

And this not only among Epicureans or other ancient Heathens, but among Moderns speaking of the Christian Religion. Now methinks it is unreasonable to oppose against the general concurring Opinion of the World, the Observation of a particular Person, or particular set of Zealots, whose Prejudice sticks close to them, and ever mixeth with their Judgment; and who read, collect, and observe with an Eve not to discover the Truth, but to defend their Prejudice. CRI. Though I cannot think with Alcipbron, yet I must own, I admire his Address and Dexterity in Argument. Popular and general Opinion is by him represented, on certain occasions, to be a sure mark of Error. But when it ferves his ends that it shou'd seem otherwise, he can as easily make it a Character of Truth. But it will by no means follow, that a profane Proverb used by the Friends and admired Authors of a Minute Philosopher, must therefore be a received Opinion, much less a Truth grounded on the Experience and Observation of Mankind. Sadness may spring from Guilt or Superstition, and Rage from Bigotry, but Darkness might as well be supposed the natural Effect of Sunshine, as fullen and furious Passions to proceed from the glad Tidings and divine Precepts of the Gospel. What is the Sum and Substance, Scope and End of Christ's Religion, but the Love of God and Man? To which all other Points and Duties are relative and subordinate. as Parts or Means, as Signs, Principles, Motives, or Effects. Now I wou'd fain know, how it is poffible for Evil or Wickedness of any kind to spring from fuch a fource. I will not pretend, there are

no evil Qualities in Christians, nor good in Minute Philosophers. But this I affirm, that whatever evil is in us, our Principles certainly lead to Good; and whatever good there may be in you, it is most certain your Principles lead to evil.

XVI. ALC. It must be owned there is a fair outfide, and many plaufible things may be faid, for the Christian Religion taken simply as it lies in the Gospel. But it is the Observation of one of our great Writers, that the first Christian Preachers very cunningly began with the fairest Face and the best moral Doctrines in the World. It was all Love, Charity, Meekness, Patience and fo forth. But when by this means they had drawn over the World and got Power, they foon changed their Appearance, and shewed Cruelty, Ambition, Avarice and every bad quality. CRI. That is to fay, some Men very cunningly preached and underwent a world of hardships, and laid down their lives to propagate the best Principles and the best Morals, to the end that others some Centuries after might reap the benefit of bad ones. Whoever may be cunning, there is not much Cunning in the maker of this Observation. ALC. And yet ever fince this Religion hath appeared in the World, we have had eternal Feuds, Factions, Massacres and Wars, the very reverse of that Hymn with which it is introduced in the Gospel: Glory be to God on high, on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men. CRI. This I will not deny. I will even own that the Gospel and the Christian Religion have been often the Pretexts for these Evils; but it will not thence follow they were the Caufe. On the contrary it is plain they cou'd not be the real proper Cause of these Evils, because a rebellious, proud, revengeful, quarrelfome Spirit is directly opposite to the whole Tenor and most express Precepts of Christianity: a Point so clear that that I shall not prove it. And secondly, because all those Evils you mention were as frequent, nay much more frequent, before the Christian Religion was known in the World. They are the common Product of the Passions and Vices of Mankind, which are sometimes covered with the Masque of Religion by wicked Men, having the Form of Godliness without the Power of it. This Truth seems so plain, that I am surprised how any Man of Sense, Knowledge, and Candour can make a doubt of it.

XVII. Take but a view of Heathen Rome; what a Scene is there of Faction and Fury and civil Rage? Let any Man confider the perpetual Feuds between the Patricians and Plebeians, the bloody and inhuman Factions of Marius and Sylla, Cinna and Octavius, and the vaft havoc of Mankind, during the two famous Triumvirates. To be short let any Man of common Candour and common Sense but cast an Eye, from one end to the other of the Roman Story, and behold that long Scene of Seditions, Murders, Massacres, Proscriptions and Desolations of every kind, enhansed by every cruel circumstance of Rage, Rapine and Revenge. and then fay, whether those Evils were introduced into the World with the Christian Religion, or whether they are not less frequent now than before? ALC. The ancient Romans, it must be owned, had a high and fierce Spirit, which produced eager Contentions and very bloody Catastrophes. The Greeks, on the other hand, were a polite and gentle fort of Men, foftened by Arts and Philosophy. It is impossible to think of the little States and Cities of Greece, without wishing to have lived in those times, without admiring their Policy and envying their Happiness. CRL Men are apt to confider the dark fides of what they possess, and the bright ones of things out of

Dial. V. PHILOSOPHER. their reach. A fine Climate, elegant Tafte, polite Amusements, love of Liberty, and a most ingenious inventive Spirit for Arts and Sciences were indisputable Prerogatives of ancient Greece. But as for Peace and Quietness, Gentleness and Humanity, I think we have plainly the advantage: For those envied Cities composed of gentle Greeks were not without their Factions, which perfecuted each other with fuch Treachery, Rage, and Malice, that in respect of them our factious Folk are meer Lambs. To be convinced of this Truth. you need only look into Thucydides *, where you will find those Cities in general involved in such bitter Factions, as for Fellow-Citizens without the formalities of War, to murder one another, even in their Senate-houses and their Temples, no regard being had to Merit, Rank, Obligation, or Nearness of Blood. And if Human Nature boiled up to fo vehement a pitch in the politest People. what wonder that favage Nations shou'd scalp, roaft, torture, and destroy each other, as they are known to do? It is therefore plain, that without Religion there wou'd not be wanting Pretexts for Quarrels and Debates; all which can very eafily be accounted for by the natural Infirmities and Corruption of Men. It wou'd not perhaps be fo easy to account for the Blindness of those, who impute the most hellish Effects to the most divine Principle, if they cou'd be supposed in earnest, and to have confidered the Point. One may daily fee ignorant and prejudiced Men make the most absurd Blunders: But that Free-thinkers, Divers to the Bottom of Things, Fair Inquirers, and Openers of Eyes should be capable of such a gross Mistake, is what one would not expect.

XVIII. ALC. The rest of Mankind we cou'd more easily give up: but as for the Greeks, Men of

Thucyd. 1. 3.

the most refined Genius express an high esteem of them, not only on account of those Qualities which you think fit to allow them, but also for their Virtues. CRI. I shall not take upon me to fav how far some Men may be prejudiced against their Country, or whether others may not be prejudiced in favour of it. But upon the fullest and most equal Observation that I am able to make, it is my opinion, that, if by Virtue is meant Truth, Justice, Gratitude, there is incomparably more Virtue, now at this day in England, than at any time cou'd be found in ancient Greece. Thus much will be allowed, that we know few Countries, if any, where Men of eminent Worth, and famous for deferving well of the Public, met with harder Fate, and were more ungratefully treated than in the most polite and learned of the Grecian States. Though Socrates it must be owned wou'd not allow, that those Statesmen, by adorning the City, augmenting the Fleet, or extending the Commerce of Athens, deserved well of their Country; or cou'd with justice complain of the ungrateful Returns made by their Fellow-Citizens, whom, while they were in Power, they had taken no care to make better Men, by improving and cultivating their Minds with the Principles of Virtue, which if they had done, they needed not to have feared their Ingratitude. If I were to declare my opinion, what gave the chief Advantage to Greeks and Romans and other Nations, which have made the greatest Figure in the World, I shou'd be apt to think it was a peculiar Reverence for their respective Laws and Institutions, which inspired them with Steadiness and Courage, and that hearty generous Love of their Country. by which they did not meerly understand a certain. Language or Tribe of Men, much less a particupar spot of Earth, but included a certain System

Dial. V. PHILOSOPHER. 199 of Manners, Customs, Notions, Rites, and Laws Civil and Religious. ALC. Oh! I perceive your Drift, you wou'd have us reverence the Laws and religious Institutions of our Country. But herein we beg to be excused, if we do not think fit to imitate the Greeks, or to be governed by any Authority whatsoever. But to return: As for Wars and Factions, I grant they ever were and ever will be in the World upon some pretext or other, as long

as Men are Men.

XIX. But there is a fort of War and Warriors peculiar to Christendom, which the Heathens had no notion of: I mean Disputes in Theology and Polemical Divines, which the World hath been wonderfully peftered with: these Teachers of Peace, Meekness, Concord, and what not! if you take their word for it: But, if you cast an eye upon their Practice, you find them to have been in all Ages the most contentious, quarrelfome, difagreeing Crew that ever appeared upon Earth. To observe the Skill and Sophistry, the Zeal and Eagerness, with which those Barbarians, the School Divines, fplit Hairs and contest about Chimæra's, gives me more Indignation, as being more abfurd and a greater fcandal to human Reafon, than all the ambitious Intrigues, Cabals, and Politics of the Court of Rome. CRI. If Divines are quarrelsome, that is not so far forth as Divine, but as Undivine and Unchristian. Justice is a good thing; and the Art of Healing is excellent; nevertheless in the administring of Justice or Phyfic Men may be wronged or poisoned. But as Wrong cannot be Justice, or the Effect of Justice, fo Poison cannot be Medicine or the Effect of Medicine, so neither can Pride or Strife be Religion or the effect of Religion. Having premised this, I acknowledge, you may often see hot-headed Bigots engage themselves in religious as well as civil

Parties.

Parties, without being of credit or fervice to either. And as for the Schoolmen in particular, I do not in the least think the Christian Religion concerned in the Defence of them, their Tenets, or their Method of handling them: but, whatever futility there may be in their Notions, or inelegancy in their Language, in pure justice to Truth one must own, they neither banter nor rail nor declaim in their Writings, and are fo far from shewing Fury or Passion, that perhaps an impartial Judge will think, the Minute Philosophers are by no means to be compared with them, for keeping close to the Point, or for Temper and good Manners. But after all, if Men are puzzled, wrangle, talk nonfenfe, and quarrel about Religion, fo they do about Law, Physic, Politics, and every thing else of moment. I ask whether in these Professions, or in any other, where men have refined and abstracted, they do not run into Disputes, Chicane, Nonsense, and Contradictions, as well as in Divinity? And yet this doth not hinder but there may be many excellent Rules. and just Notions, and useful Truths in all those Professions. In all Disputes human Passions too often mix themselves, in proportion as the Subject is conceived to be more or less important. But we ought not to confound the Cause of Men with the Cause of God, or make Human Follies an Objection to Divine Truths. It is easy to distinguish what looks like Wisdom from above, and what proceeds from the passion and weakness of This is fo clear a Point, that one wou'd be tempted to think, the not doing it was an Effeet, not of Ignorance, but, of fomething worfe.

XX. The Conduct we object to Minute Philofophers is a natural confequence of their Principles. Whatfoever they can reproach us with is an Effect, not of our Principles, but of Human Paffion and Frailty.

Frailty. ALC. This is admirable. So we must no longer object to Christians the absurd Contentions of Councils, the Cruelty of Inquisitions, the Ambition and Usurpations of Churchmen. CRI. You may object them to Christians but not to Christianity. If the divine Author of our Religion and his Disciples have sowed a good Seed; and together with this good Seed, the Enemies of his Gospel (among whom are to be reckoned the Minute Philosophers of all Ages) have fowed bad Seeds, whence spring Tares and Thistles; is it not evident, these bad Weeds cannot be imputed to the good Seed, or to those who fowed it? Whatever you do or can object against Eccesiastical Tyranny, Usurpation, or Sophistry, may, without any blemish or disadvantage to Religion, be acknowledged by all true Christians; provided still that you impute those wicked Effects to their true Cause, not blaming any Principles or Persons for them, but those that really produce or justify them. Certainly, as the Interests of Christianity are not to be supported by unchristian Methods, whenever these are made use of, it must be supposed there is fome other latent Principle which fets them at work. If the very Court of Rome hath been known, from Motives of Policy, to oppose fettling the Inquisition in a Kingdom, where the fecular Power hath endeavoured to introduce it in fpight of that Court *: We may well suppose, that elsewhere Factions of State, and political Views of Princes, have given birth to Transactions feemingly religious, wherein at bottom neither Religion, nor Church, nor Churchmen, were at all confider'd. As no Man of common Sense and Honesty will engage in a general Defence of Ecclefiaftics, fo I think no Man of common Candour can condemn them in general. Wou'd you think

* P. Paolo istoria dell' Inquisitione p. 42.

0 3

202

it reasonable, to blame all Statesmen, Lawyers, or Soldiers, for the Faults committed by those of their Profession, though in other Times, or in other Countries, and influenced by other Maxims and other Discipline? And if not, why do you measure with one Rule to the Clergy, and another to the Laity? Surely the best Reason that can be given for this is Prejudice. Shou'd any Man rake together all the Mischiefs that have been committed in all Ages and Nations, by Soldiers and Lawyers, you wou'd, I suppose, conclude from thence. not that the State shou'd be deprived of those useful Professions, but only that their Exorbitances shou'd be guarded against and punished. If you took the fame equitable Course with the Clergy, there wou'd indeed be less to be faid against you; but then you wou'd have much less to fay. This plain obvious Confideration, if every one who read considered, wou'd lessen the Credit of your Declaimers. ALC. But when all is faid that can be faid, it must move a Man's Indignation to see reafonable Creatures, under the Notion of Study and Learning, employ'd in reading and writing fo many voluminous Tracts, de lana caprina. CRI. I shall not undertake the Vindication of Theological Writings, a general Defence, being as needless as a general Charge is groundless. Only let them speak for themselves; and let no Man condemn them upon the Word of a Minute Philosopher. But we will imagine the very worst, and suppose a wrangling Pedant in Divinity disputes and ruminates and writes upon a refined Point, as useless and unintelligible as you please. Suppose this same Person bred a Layman, might he not have employ'd himself in tricking Bargains, vexatious Law-suits, Factions, Seditions, and such like Amusements, with much more Prejudice to the Public? Suffer then curious Wits to spin Cobwebs:

" good

webs; where is the hurt? ALC. The Mischief is, what Men want in light they commonly make up in Heat, Zeal, and ill Nature, being Weapons constantly exerted by the Partisans, as well as Champions, on either Side: And those perhaps not mean Pedants or Book-worms. You shall often fee even the learned and eminent Divine lay himfelf out in explaining Things inexplicable, or contend for a barren Point of Theory, as if his Life, Liberty, or Fortune were at stake. CRI. No doubt all Points in Divinity are not of equal Moment. Some may be too fine spun, and others have more Strefs laid on them than they deferve. Be the Subject what it will, you shall often observe that a Point by being controverted, fingled out, examined, and nearly inspected, groweth considerable to the fame Eye, that, perhaps, wou'd have overlooked it in a large and comprehensive View. Nor is it an uncommon thing, to behold Ignorance and Zeal united in Men, who are born with a Spirit of Party, though the Church or Religion have in Truth but small Share in it. Nothing is easier than to make a Caricatura (as the Painters call it) of any Profession upon Earth: But at bottom. there will be found nothing fo strange in all this Charge upon the Clergy, as the Partiality of those who censure them, in supposing the common Defects of Mankind peculiar to their Order, or the Effect of religious Principles. ALC. Other Folks may dispute or squabble as they please, and no Body mind them; but it feems thefe venerable Squabbles of the Clergy pass for Learning, and interest Mankind. To use the Words of the most ingenious Characterizer of our Times, " A Ring is " made, and Readers gather in abundance. Eve-" ry one takes Party and encourages his own Side. "This shall be my Champion! This Man for " my Money! Well hit on our Side! Again a

" good Stroke! There he was even with him! " Have at him the next Bout! Excellent Sport! CRI. Methinks I trace the Man of Quality and Breeding in this delicate Satyr, which fo politely ridicules those Arguments, Answers, Defences and Replications which the Press groans under. ALC. To the infinite waste of Time and Paper, and all the while no Body is one whit the wifer. And who indeed can be the wifer for reading Books upon subjects quite out of the way, incomprehensible, and most wretchedly written? What Man of Sense or Breeding wou'd not abhor the Infection of prolix Pulpit Eloquence, or of that dry, formal, pedantic, stiff, and clumfy Style which smells of

the Lamp and the College.

XXI. They who have the Weakness to reverence the Universities as Seats of Learning, must needs think this a strange Reproach; but it is a very just one. For the most ingenious Men are now agreed. that they are only Nurseries of Prejudice, Corruption, Barbarism, and Pedantry. LYS. For my part, I find no Fault with Universities. All I know is, that I had the spending three hundred Pounds a Year in one of them, and think it the chearfulest time of my Life. As for their Books and Style I had not leifure to mind them. CRI. Whoever hath a mind to weed will never want work; and he that shall pick out bad books on every Subject will foon fill his Library. I do not know what Theological Writings Alcipbron and his Friends may be converfant in; but I will venture to fay, one may find among our English Divines many Writers, who for compass of Learning, weight of Matter, Strength of Argument, and Purity of Style, are not inferiour to any in our Language. It is not my Defign to apologize for the Universities: whatever is amiss in them (and what

^{*} Characteristics, Vol. III. c. 2.

is there perfect among Men?) I heartily wish amended. but I dare affirm, because I know it to be true, that any impartial Observer, although they shou'd not come up to what in Theory he might wish or imagine, will nevertheless find them much superior to those that in Fact are to be found in other Countries, and far beyond the mean Picture that is drawn of them by Minute Phisosophers. It is natural for those to rail most at Places of Education, who have profited least by them. Weak and fond Parents will also readily impute to a wrong Caufe, those Corruptions themselves have occasion'd, by allowing their Children more Money than they knew how to spend innocently. And too often a Gentleman who has been idle at the College, and kept idle Company, will judge of a whole University from his own Cabal. ALC. Crito mistakes the Point, I vouch the Authority, not of a Dunce or a Rake or abfurd Parent, but of the most consummate Critic this Age has produced. This great Man characterizeth Men of the Church and Univerfities with the finest Touches and masterly Pencil. What do you think he calls them? EUPH. What? ALC. Why, the black Tribe, Magicians, Formalists, Pedants, bearded Boys, and, having fufficiently derided and exploded them and their mean ungenteel Learning, he fets most admirable Models of his own for good Writing: And it must be acknowledged they are the finest things in our Language; as I cou'd easily convince you, for I am never without fomething of that noble Writer about me. EUPH. He is then a noble Writer. ALC. I tell you he is a Nobleman. EUPH. But a Nobleman who writes is one thing, and a Noble Writer another. ALC. Both Characters are coincident, as you may fee.

XXII.

XXII. Upon which Alcipbron pulled a Treatife out of his Pocket, entitled a Soliloquy or Advice to an Author. Wou'd you behold, faid he looking round upon the Company, a noble Specimen of fine Writing; do but dip into this Book: which Crito opening read verbatim as follows *.

Where then are the Pleasures which Ambition pro-

- . And Love affords? How's the gay World enjoy'd?
- Or are those to be esteem'd no Pleasures
- Which are lost by Dulness and Inaction?
- · But Indolence is the highest Pleasure.
- . To live and not feel! To feel no Trouble.
- What Good then? Life itself. And is
- This properly to live? is fleeping Life?
- Is this what I shou'd study to prolong?
- · Here the
- Fantastic Tribe itself seems scandaliz'd.
- A Civil War begins : The major Part
- Of the capricious Dames do range themselves
- " On Reason's Side,
- And declare against the languid Siren.
- · Ambition blushes at the offer'd Sweet.
- · Conceit and Vanity take Superior Airs.
- · Ev'n Luxury herself in ber polite
- And elegant Humour reproves th' Apostate
- · Sifter.
- And marks ber as an Alien to true Pleasure.
- · Away thou
- Drowfy Phantome! Haunt me no more for I
- · Have learned from better than thy Sisterbood
- · That Life and Happiness consist in Action
- . And Employment.
- · But here a bufy Form follicits us,
- . Active, Industrious, Watchful and despising
- Pains and Labour. She wears the serious
- . Countenance of Virtue, but with Features

Of Anxiety and Disquiet.

What is't she mutters? What looks she on with

Such Admiration and Astonishment?

Bags! Coffers! Heaps of Spining Metal! What?

For the service of Luxury? For her?

These Preparations? Art thou then ber Friend,

Grave Fancy! Is it for ber thou toilest?

. No, but for Provision against Want.

But Luxury apart! tell me now,

· Hast thou not already a Competence?

'Tis good to be secure against the Fear

- Of starving. Is there then no Death but this?
- No other Passage out of Life? Are other Doors

Secur'd if this be bar'd? Say Avarice?

Thou emptiest of Phantoms, is it not vile

· Cowardice then ferv'ft? what further have I then

To do with thee (thou doubly vile Dependent)

When once I have difmist thy Patroness,

And despised ber threats?

Thus I contend with Fancy and Opinion.

Euphranor, having heard thus far, cried out: What! will you never have done with your Poetry? another time may ferve: But why shou'd we break off our Conference to read a Play? You are mistaken, it is no Play nor Poetry, replied Alciphron, but a famous modern Critic moralizing in Profe. You must know this great Man hath (to use his own Words) revealed a Grand Arcanum to the World, having instructed Mankind in what he calls Mirrour-writing, Self-discoursing Practice, and Author Practice, and shew'd " That by virtue " of an intimate Recess, we may discover a cer-" tain Duplicity of Soul, and divide our Self into "two Parties, or (as he varies the Phrase) prac-" tically form the Dual Number." In confequence whereof, he hath found out that a Man may argue with himself, and not only with himfelf, but also with Notions, Sentiments, and Vices, which

which by a marvellous Prosopopæia he converts into fo many Ladies, and fo converted, he confutes and confounds them in a Divine Strain. Can any thing be finer, bolder, or more fublime? EUPH. It is very wonderful. I thought indeed you had been reading a Piece of a Tragedy. Is this he who despiseth our Universities, and sets up for reforming the Style and Tafte of the Age? ALC. The very fame. This is the admired Critic of our Times. Nothing can fland the Test of his correct Judgment, which is equally fevere to Poets and Parsons. " The British Muses (faith this " great Man) life as in their Cradles: and their " flammering Tongues, which nothing but Youth " and Rawness can excuse, have hitherto spoken " in wretched Pun and Quibble. Our Dramatic " Shakespear, our Fletcher, Johnson, and out " Epique Milton preserve this Style. And, ac-" cording to him, even our later Authors aiming " at a false Sublime, entertain our raw Fancy and " unpractifed Ear, which has not yet had leisure 66 to form itself, and become truly musical." EUPH. Pray what Effect may the Lessons of this great Man, in whose Eyes our learned Professors are but bearded Boys, and our most celebrated Wits but wretched Punsters, have had upon the Public? Hath he rubbed off the College Ruft, cured the rudeness and rawness of our Authors, and reduced them to his own Attic Standard? Do they aspire to his true Sublime, or imitate his chaste unaffected Style? ALC. Doubtless the Taste of the Age is much mended: in proof whereof his Writings are univerfally admired. When our Author published this Treatise, he forefaw the public Tafte wou'd improve apace; that Arts and Letters wou'd grow to great perfection; that there wou'd be a happy Birth of Genius: of all which things he fpoke, as he faith himfelf, in a prophetic a prophetic Style. CRI. And yet, notwithstanding the prophetical Predictions of this Critic, I do not find any Science that throve among us of late, fo much as the Minute Philosophy. In this kind. it must be confessed, we have had many notable Productions. But whether they are fuch Masterpieces for good Writing, I leave to be determin-

ed by their Readers.

XXIII. In the mean time, I must beg to be excused, if I cannot believe your great Man on his bare word; when he wou'd have us think, that Ignorance and ill Taste are owing to the Christian Religion or the Clergy, it being my fincere Opinion, that whatever Learning or Knowledge we have among us, is derived from that Order. If those, who are so sagacious at discovering a Mote in other Eyes, wou'd but purge their own, I believe they might eafily fee this Truth. For what but Religion cou'd kindle and preferve a Spirit towards Learning, in fuch a Northern rough People? Greece produced Men of active and fub-The public Conventions and Æmutile Genius. lations of their Cities forwarded that Genius: And their natural Curiofity was amused and excited by learned Conversations, in their public Walks and Gardens and Porticos. Our Genius leads to Amusements of a groffer kind: we breathe a groffer and a colder Air: and that Curiofity which was general in the Athenians, and the gratifying of which was their chief Recreation, is among our People of Fashion treated like Affectation, and as fuch banished from polite Assemblies and places of Refort; and without doubt wou'd in a little Time be banished the Country, if it were not for the great Refervoirs of Learning, where those Formalists, Pedants, and bearded Boys, as your profound Critic calls them, are maintained by the Liberality and Piety of our Predecessors. For it

is as evident that Religion was the Cause of those Seminaries, as it is that they are the Caufe or Source of all the Learning and Taste which is to be found, even in those very Men who are the declared Enemies of our Religion and public Foundations. Every one, who knows any thing, knows we are indebted for our Learning to the Greek and Latin Tongues. This those severe Censors will readily grant. Perhaps they may not be fo ready to grant, what all Men must see, that we are indebted for those Tongues to our Religion. What else cou'd have made foreign and dead Languages in fuch request among us? What cou'd have kept in being and handed them down to our times, through fo many dark Ages in which the World was wasted and disfigured by Wars and Violence? What, but a regard to the Holy Scriptures, and Theological Writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church? And in fact, do we not find that the Learning of those Times was folely in the Hands of Ecclefiastics, that they alone lighted the Lamp in succession one from another, and transmitted it down to After-ages; and that ancient Books were collected and preserved in their Colleges and Seminaries, when all Love and Remembrance of polite Arts and Studies was extinguished among the Laity, whose Ambition intirely turned to Arms?

XXIV. ALC. There is, I must needs say, one fort of Learning undoubtedly of Christian Original, and peculiar to the Universities; where our Youth spend several Years in acquiring that mysterious jargon of Scholasticism; than which there cou'd never have been contrived a more effectual Method, to perplex and confound Human Understanding. It is true, Gentlemen are untaught by the World what they have been taught at the College:

Dial. V. PHILOSOPHER.

211

College: but then their Time is doubly loft. CRI. But what if this scholastic Learning was not of Christian but of Mahometan Original, being derived from the Arabs? And what if this Grievance of Gentlemen's spending several Years in learning and unlearning this Jargon, be all Grimace and a Specimen only of the truth and candour of certain Minute Philosophers, who raise great Invectives from flight occasions, and judge too often without inquiring. Surely it wou'd be no fuch deplorable loss of Time, if a young Gentleman spent a few Months upon that fo much despised and decried Art of Logic, a Surfeit of which is by no means the prevailing Nusance of this Age. It is one thing to waste one's Time in learning and unlearning the barbarous Terms, wiredrawn Distinctions, and prolix Sophistry of the Schoolmen, and another to attain some exactness in Defining and Arguing: Things perhaps not altogether beneath the Dignity even of a Minute Philosopher. There was indeed a Time, when Logic was confidered as its own Object: And that Art of Reafoning, instead of being transferred to Things turned altogether upon Words and Abstractions; which produced a fort of Leprofy in all parts of Knowledge, corrupting and converting them into hollow verbal Disputations in a most impure Dia-But those Times are passed; and that, which had been cultivated as the principal Learning for fome Ages, is now confidered in another Light, and by no means makes that Figure in the Universities, or bears that Part in the Studies of young Gentlemen educated there, which is pretended by those admirable Reformers of Religion and Learning, the Minute Philosophers.

XXV. But who were they that encouraged and produced the Restoration of Arts and polite Learning? What Share had the Minute Philosophers in

this Affair? Matthias Corvinus King of Hungary, Alphonfus King of Naples, Cosmus de Medicis, Picus of Mirandula, and other Princes and great Men, famous for Learning themselves, and for encouraging it in others with a munificent Liberality, were neither Turks nor Gentiles nor Minute Philosophers. Who was it that transplanted and revived the Greek Language and Authors, and with them all polite Arts and Literature in the West? Was it not chiefly Bestarion a Cardinal. Marcus Musurus an Archbishop, Theodore Gaza a private Clergyman? Has there been a greater and more renowned Patron, and Restorer of elegant Studies in every kind, fince the days of Augustus Cafar, than Leo the tenth Pope of Rome? Did any Writers approach the Purity of the Classics nearer than the Cardinals Bembus and Sadoletus. or than the Bishops Fovius and Vida? not to mention an endless Number of ingenious Ecclesiastics, who flourished on the other side of the Alpes in the Golden Age (as the Italians call it) of Leo the Tenth, and wrote, both in their own Language and the Latin, after the best Models of Antiquity. It is true, this first Recovery of Learning preceded the Reformation, and lighted the way to it: But the Religious Controversies, which enfued, did wonderfully propagate and improve it in all Parts of Christendom. And furely, the Church of England is, at least, as well calculated for the Encouragement of Learning as that of Rome. Experience confirms this Observation; and I believe the Minute Philosophers will not be fo partial to Rome as to deny it. ALC. It is impossible your account of Learning beyond the Alpes shou'd be true. The noble Critic in my hands, having complimented the French, to whom he allows fome good Authors, afferts of other Foreigners, particularly the Italians, " That they may be " reckoned

" reckoned no better than the Corrupters of true Learning and Erudition." CRI. With fome forts of Critics, Dogmatical Censures and Conclufions are not always the refult of perfect Knowledge or exact Inquiry: And if they harangue upon Taste, truth of Art, a just Piece, grace of Style, Attic Elegance and fuch Topics, they are to be understood only as those that would fain talk themselves into Reputation for Courage. To hear Thrasymachus speak of Resentment, Duels, and point of Honour, one wou'd think him ready to burst with Valour. LYS. Whatever Merit this Writer may have as a Demolisher, I always thought he had very little as a Builder. It is natural for careless Writers to run into Faults they never think of: But for an exact and fevere Critic to shoot his Bolt at random, is unpardonable. If he, who professes at every turn an high esteem for polite Writing, shou'd yet despise those who most excel in it; one would be tempted to suspect his Tafte. But if the very Man, who of all Men talks most about Art, and Taste, and critical Skill, and wou'd be thought to have most considered those Points, shou'd often deviate from his own Rules, into the false Sublime or the mauvaise Plaifanterie; What reasonable Man would follow the Taste and Judgment of such a Guide, or be seduced to climb the steep Ascent, or tread in the rugged Paths of Virtue on his Recommendation?

MXVI. ALC. But to return, methinks Crito makes no Compliment to the Genius of his Country, in supposing that Englishmen might not have wrought out of themselves, all Art and Science and good Taste, without being beholden to Church or Universities, or ancient Languages. CRI. What might have been is only Conjecture. What has been, it is not difficult to know. That there is a Vein in Britain, of as rich an Ore as ever

Dial. V. was in any Country, I will not deny; but it lies deep, and will cost Pains to come at: And extraordinary Pains require an extraordinary Motive. As for what lies next the Surface, it feems but indifferent, being neither fo good nor in such plenty as in some other Countries. It was the Comparifon of an ingenious Florentine, that the celebrated Poems of Taffo and Ariosto are like two Gardens, the one of Cucumbers, the other of Melons. In the one you shall find few bad, but the best are not a very Good Fruit, in the other much the greater part are good for nothing, but those that are good are excellent. Perhaps the fame Comparison may hold, between the English and some of their Neighbours. ALC. But suppose we should grant that the Christian Religion and its Seminaries might have been of use, in preserving or retrieving polite Arts and Letters; what then? Will you make this an Argument of its Truth? CRI. I will make it an Argument of Prejudice and Ingratitude in those Minute Philosophers, who object Darkness, Ignorance, and Rudeness, as an Effect of that very thing, which above all others hath enlightened and civilized and embellished their Country: which is as truly indebted to it for Arts and Sciences (which nothing but Religion was ever known to have planted in fuch a Latitude) as for that general Sense of Virtue and Humanity, and the Belief of a Providence and future State, which all the Argumentation of Mi-

bolish. XXVII. ALC. It is ftrange you shou'd still perfift to argue, as if all the Gentlemen of our Sect were Enemies to Virtue, and downright Atheists: Though I have affured you of the contrary, and that we have among us feveral, who profess themfelves in the Interests of Virtue and Natural Re-

-nute Philosophers hath not yet been able to a-

ligion,

ligion, and have also declared, that I myself do now argue upon that Foot. CRI. How can you pretend, to be in the Interest of Natural Religion. and yet be professed Enemies of the Christian, the only established Religion which includes whatever is excellent in the Natural, and which is the only means of making those Precepts, Duties, and Notions, fo called, become reverenced throughout the World? Would not he be thought weak or infincere, who shou'd go about to persuade People, that he was much in the Interests of an earthly Monarch; that he loved and admired his Government; when at the same time he shewed himself on all occasions, a most bitter enemy of those very Persons and Methods, which above all others contributed most to his Service, and to make his Dignity known and revered, his Laws observed, or his Dominion extended? And is not this what Minute Philosophers do, while they fet up for Advocates of God and Religion, and yet do all they can to discredit Christians and their Worship? It must be owned, indeed, that you argue against Christianity, as the Cause of Evil and Wickedness in the World; but with fuch Arguments, and in fuch a manner, as might equally prove the fame thing of civil Government, of Meat and Drink, of every Faculty and Profession, of Learning, of Eloquence, and even of Human Reason itself. After all, even those of your Sect who allow themfelves to be called Deists, if their Notions are throughly examined, will I fear be found to include little of Religion in them. As for the Providence of God watching over the Conduct of Human Agents, and dispensing Bleffings or Chastifements, the Immortality of the Soul, a final Judgment, and future State of Rewards and Punishments; how few, if any, of your Free-thinkers have made it their Endeavour to possess Mens Minds

P 2

with a ferious fense of those great points of Natural Religion! How many, on the contrary, endeavour to render the Belief of them doubtful or ridiculous! LYS. To speak the Truth, I for my part, had never any liking to Religion of any kind, either revealed or unrevealed: And I dare venture to fay the same for those Gentlemen of our Sect that I am acquainted with, having never observed them guilty of so much meanness, as even to mention the Name of God with Reverence, or speak with the least regard of Piety or any fort of Worship. There may perhaps be found one or two formal pretenders to Enthuliasm and Devotion, in the way of Natural Religion, who laughed at Christians for publishing Hymns and Meditations, while they plagued the World with as bad of their own: But the sprightly Men make a jest of all this. It seems to us meer Pedantry. Sometimes, indeed, in good Company one may hear a Word dropt in Commendation of Honour and Good-nature: but the former of these. by Connoisseurs, is always understood to mean nothing but Fashion, as the latter is nothing but Temper and Constitution, which guides a Man just as Appetite doth a Brute.

Notions, which beget one another without end; to take the matter short, neither I nor my Friends for our Souls cou'd ever comprehend, why Man might not do very well, and govern himself without any Religion at all, as well as a Brute which is thought the sillier Creature of the two. Have Brutes Instincts, Senses, Appetites, and Passions, to steer and conduct them? So have Men, and Reason over and above to consult upon occasion. From these Premises we conclude, the Road of Human Life is sufficiently lighted without Religion. CRI. Brutes having but small power, limited

to things prefent or particular, are sufficiently opposed and kept in order, by the Force or Faculties of other Animals and the Skill of Man, without Conscience or Religion: But Conscience is a necessary balance to Human Reason, a Faculty of fuch mighty Extent and Power, especially toward Mischief. Besides, other Animals are, by the Law of their Nature, determined to one certain end or kind of Being, without Inclination or Means either to deviate or go beyond it. But Man hath in him a Will and higher Principle; by virtue whereof he may pursue different or even contrary ends, and either fall short of or exceed the Perfection natural to his Species in this World, as he is capable either, by giving up the Reins to his fenfual Appetites, of degrading himself into the condition of Brutes, or elfe, by well ordering and improving his Mind, of being transformed into the fimilitude of Angels. Man alone of all Animals hath understanding to know his God. What availeth this Knowledge unless it be to ennoble Man, and raife him to an Imitation and Participation of the Divinity? Or what cou'd fuch Ennoblement avail if to end with this Life? Or how can these things take effect without Religion? But the points of Vice and Virtue, Man and Beaft, Sense and Intellect, have been already at large canvassed. What! Lysicles, wou'd you have us go back where we were three or four days ago? LTS. By no means: I had much rather go forward, and make an end as foon as possible. But to fave trouble, give me leave to tell you once for all, that, fay what you can, you shall never perfuade me fo many ingenious agreeable Men are in the wrong, and a pack of fnarling four Bigots in the right.

XXIX. CRI. O Lysicles, I neither look for Religion among Bigots, nor Reason among Libertines; each kind disgrace their several Pretensions; the one owning no regard even to the plain-

est and most important Truths, while the others exert an angry Zeal for points of least concern. And furely whatever there is of filly, narrow, and uncharitable in the Bigot, the fame is in great measure to be imputed to the conceited Ignorance, and petulant Profaneness of the Libertine. And it is not at all unlikely that as Libertines make Bigots, fo Bigots shou'd make Libertines, the Extreme of one party being ever observed to produce a contrary Extreme of another. And although, while these Adversaries draw the Rope of Contention, Reason and Religion are often called upon, yet are they perhaps very little confidered or concerned in the Contest. Lysicles, instead of an-Iwering Crito, turned short upon Alcipbron. It was always my Opinion, faid he, that nothing cou'd be fillier than to think of destroying Christianity, by crying up Natural Religion. Whoever thinks highly of the one can never, with any confistency, think meanly of the other; it being very evident, that Natural Religion, without Revealed, never was and never can be established or received any where, but in the brains of a few idle speculative Men. I was aware what your Con-The Belief of God, ceffions wou'd come to. Virtue, a Future State, and fuch fine notions, are, as every one may fee with half an eye, the very Basis and corner Stone of the Christian Religion. Lay but this Foundation for them to build on, and you shall soon see what Superstructures our Men of Divinity will raise from it. The Truth and Importance of those points once admitted, a Man need be no Conjurer to prove upon that Principle, the Excellency and Usefulness of the Christian Religion: And then to be fure, there must be Priests to teach and propagate this useful Religi-And if Priests, a regular Subordination without doubt in this worthy Society, and a Provision for their Maintenance, such as may enable them to perform all those Rites and Ceremonies with Decency, and keep their facred Character above Contempt. And the plain consequence of all this is a Consederacy between the Prince and the Priesthood to subdue the People: So we have let in at last upon us, a long train of Ecclesiastical Evils, Priestcraft, Hierarchy, Inquisition. We have lost our Liberty and Property, and put the Nation to vast Expence, only to purchase Bridles and Saddles for their own backs.

XXX. This being spoke with some Sharpness of Tone, and an upbraiding Air, touched Alcipbron to the quick, who replied nothing, but shew'd Confusion in his Looks, Crito smiling look'd at Euphranor and me, then, casting an eye on the two Philosophers, spoke as follows: If I may be admitted to interpose good Offices, for preventing a Rupture between old Friends and Brethren in Opinion, I wou'd observe, that in this Charge of Lyficles there is fomething right and fomething wrong. It feems right to affert as he doth, that the real Belief of Natural Religion will lead a Man to approve of Revealed: But it is as wrong to affert, that Inquisitions, Tyranny, and Ruin must follow from thence. Your Free-Thinkers, without Offence be it faid, feem to mistake their Talent. They imagine strongly, but reason weakly; mighty at Exaggeration, and jejune in Argument! Can no Method be found, to relieve them from the Terror of that fierce and bloody Animal an English Parson? Will it not suffice to pair his Talons without chopping off his Fingers? Then they are fuch wonderful Patriots for Liberty and Property! When I hear these two Words in the mouth of a minute Philosopher, I am put mind of the Teste di Ferro at Rome. His Holiness, it seems, not having Power to affign Penfions on Spanish Benefices to any but Natives of Spain, always keeps at Rome two Spaniards, called Teste di Ferro, who have the Name of all such Pensions but not the Pro-

fit, which goes to Italians. As we may fee every day, both Things and Notions placed to the account of Liberty and Property, which in reality neither have nor are meant to have any share in them. What! Is it impossible for a Man to be a Christian, but he must be a Slave; or a Clergyman, but he must have the Principles of an Inquisitor? I am far from screening and justifying Appetite of Domination or Tyrannical Power in Ecclefiaftics. Some, who have been guilty in that respect, have forely paid for it, and it is to be hoped they always will. But having laid the Fury and Folly of the ambitious Prelate, is it not time to look about and fpy whether, on the other hand, some Evil may not possibly accrue to the State, from the overflowing Zeal of an Independent Whig? This 1 may affirm, without being at any pains to prove it, that the worst Tyranny this Nation ever felt was from the Hands of Patriots of that Stamp.

XXXI. LYS. I don't know. Tyranny is a harsh Word, and fometimes misapplied. When spirited Men of independent Maxims create a Ferment or make a Change in the State: He that lofeth is apt to consider things in one light, and he that wins in another. In the mean time this is certainly good Policy, that we shou'd be frugal of our Money, and referve it for better Uses, than to expend on the Church and Religion. CRI. Surely the old Apologue of the Belly and Members need not be repeated to fuch knowing Men. It shou'd feem as needless to observe, that all other States, which ever made any Figure in the World for Wisdom and Politeness, have thought Learning deserved Encouragement as well as the Sword; that Grants for religious Uses were as fitting as for Knights Service; and Foundations for propagating Piety, as necessary to the publick Welfare and Defence, as either Civil or Military Establishments. But I ask who are at this Expence, and what is this Expence fo much complained of? LYS. As if you had never heard of Church Lands and Tithes. CRI. But I wou'd fain know, how they can be charged as an Expence, either upon the Nation or private Men. Where nothing is exported the Nation lofeth nothing: and it is all one to the Public, whether Money circulates at Home through the Hands of a Vicar or a Squire. Then as for private Men, who, for want of Thought, are full of Complaint about the payment of Tithes; can any Man justly complain of it as a Tax, that he pays what never belonged to him? The Tenant rents his farm with this Condition, and pays his Landlord proportionably less, than if his Farm had been exempt from it: So he loofeth nothing: it being all one to him whether he pays his Pastor or his Landlord. The Landlord cannot complain that he has not what he hath no Right to, either by Grant, Purchase, or Inheritance. is the Case of Tithes; and as for Church Lands, he furely can be no Free-thinker, nor any Thinker at all, who doth not fee, that no Man whether Noble, Gentle, or Plebeian, hath any fort of Right or Claim to them, which he may not with equal Juftice pretend to all the Lands in the Kingdom. LYS. At present indeed we have no Right, and that is our Complaint. CRI. You wou'd have then what you have no Right to. LYS. Not fo neither: What we wou'd have is first a Right convey'd by Law, and in the next place, the Lands by virtue of fuch Right. CRI. In order to this, it might be expedient in the first place, to get an Act passed for excommunicating from all civil Rights every Man, that is a Christian, a Scholar, and wears a black Coat, as guilty of three capital Offences against the public Weal of this Realm. LYS. To deal frankly, I think it wou'd be an excellent good Act. It wou'd provide at once for feveral.

several deserving Men, rare Artificers in Wit and Argument and Ridicule, who have, too many of them, but fmall Fortunes with a great Arrear of Merit towards their Country, which they have fo long enlightened and adorned gratis. EUPH. Pray tell me, Lyficles, are not the Clergy legally possessed of their Lands and Emoluments? LYS. No Body denies it. EUPH. Have they not been possessed of them from Time immemorial? LYS. This too I grant. EUPH. They claim then by Law and ancient Prescription. LYS. They do. EUPH. Have the oldest Families of the Nobility a better Title? LYS. I believe not. It grieves me to fee fo many overgrown Estates in the hands of ancient Families, on account of no other Merit, but what they brought with them into the EUPH. May you not then as well take their Lands too, and bestow them on the Minute Philosophers, as Persons of more Merit? LYS. So much the better. This enlarges our View, and opens a new Scene: It is very delightful in the Contemplation of Truth, to behold how one Theory grows out of another. ALC. Old Patus used to fay; that if the Clergy were deprived of their Hire, we shou'd lose the most popular Argument against them. LYS, But so long as Men live by Religion, there will never be wanting Teachers and Writers in Defence of it. CRI. And how can you be fure they wou'd be wanting though they did not live by it; fince it is well known Christianity had its Defenders even when Men died by it? LYS. One thing I know, there is a rare Nurfery of young Plants growing up, who have been carefully guarded against every Air of Prejudice, and sprinkled with the Dew of our choicest Principles; mean while, Wishes are wearisome, and to our infinite Regret nothing can be done, for long as there remains any Prejudice in favour of old

demonstrate to be only Words and Notions.

XXXII. But, I can never hope, Crito, to make you think my Scheme reasonable. We reason each right upon his own Principles, and shall never agree till we quit our Principles, which cannot be done by reasoning. We all talk of Just and Right and Wrong, and public Good, and all those things. The Names may be the fame, but the Notions and Conclusions very different, perhaps diametrically opposite; and yet each may admit of clear Proofs, and be inferred by the fame way of reafoning. For instance, the Gentlemen of the Club which I frequent, define Man to be a fociable Animal: Confequently, we exclude from this Definition all those Human Creatures, of whom it may be faid, we had rather have their Room than And fuch, though wearing the their Company. Shape of Men, are to be esteemed in all account of Reason, not as Men, but only as Human Crea-Hence it plainly follows, that Men of Pleasure, Men of Humour, and Men of Wit, are alone properly and truly to be confidered as Men. Whatever therefore conduceth to the Emolument of fuch, is for the good of Mankind, and confequently very just and lawful, although seeming to be attended with lofs or Damage to other Creatures: inafmuch as no real injury can be done in life or property to those, who know not how to enjoy them. This we hold for clear and well connected Reasoning. But others may view things in another light, affign different Definitions, draw other inferences, and perhaps confider, what we suppose the very Top and Flower of the Creation, only as a wart or excrescence of Human Nature. From all which there must ensue a very different System of Morals, Politics, Rights, and Notions. CRI.

THE MINUTE Dial. V. CRI. If you have a mind to argue, we will argue, if you have more mind to jest, we will laugh with you. LYS.

Ridentem dicere verum

Quid vetat?

This Partition of our own kind into Men and Human Creatures, puts me in mind of another Notion, broached by one of our Club, whom we used

to call the Pythagorean.

XXXIII. He made a three-fold Partition of the Human Species, into Birds, Beafts, and Fishes, being of Opinion that the Road of Life lies upwards, in a perpetual Ascent through the Scale of Being: In such fort, that the Soul of Insects after death are preferr'd into Human Bodies, and in the next Stage into beings of a higher and more perfect kind. This Man we confidered at first as a fort of Heretic, because his Scheme seemed not to confift with our fundamental Tenet, the Mortality of the Soul: But he justified the Notion to be innocent, inafmuch as it included nothing of Reward or Punishment, and was not proved by any Argument, which supposed or implied either incorporeal Spirit or Providence, being only inferred, by way of Analogy, from what he had obferved in Human Affairs, the Court, the Church, and the Army; wherein the Tendency is always upwards from lower Posts to higher. According to this System, the Fishes are those Men who swim in pleasure, such as petits maitres, bons vivans, and honest Fellows. The beasts are dry, drudging, covetous, rapacious Folk, and all those addicted to care and business like Oxen, and other dry land Animals, which spend their lives in labour and fatigue. The Birds are airy notional Men, Enthufiafts, Projectors, Philosophers, and such like: In each Species every Individual retain a Tincture of his former State, which constitutes what is callcd ed Genius. If you ask me which Species of Human Creatures I like best, I answer the slying Fish; that is a Man of animal Enjoyment with a mixture of Whim. Thus you see we have our Creeds and our Systems, as well as graver Folks; with this Difference, that they are not strait-laced but sit easy to be slipped off or on, as humour or occasion serves. And now I can, with the greatest equanimity imaginable, hear my Opinions argu-

ed against, or confuted.

XXXIV. ALC. It were to be wished, all Men were of that mind. But you shall find a fort of Men, whom I need not name, that cannot bear with the least temper, to have their Opinions examined or their Faults censured. They are against Reason, because Reason is against them. For our parts we are all for Liberty of Conscience. If our Tenets are abfurd, we allow them to be freely argued and inspected; and by parity of Reason we might hope to be allowed the fame Privilege. with respect to the Opinions of other Men. CRI. O Alcipbron, Wares that will not bear the light are justly to be suspected. Whatever therefore moves you to make this Complaint, take my Word I never will: But as hitherto I have allowed your Reason its full scope, so for the future I always shall. And though I cannot approve of railing or declaiming, not even in my felf, whenever you have shewed me the way to it: Yet this I will anfwer for, that you shall ever be allowed to reason as closely and as strenuously as you can. But for the love of truth, be candid, and do not spend your Strength and our Time, in points of no fignificancy, or foreign to the purpose, or agreed between us. We allow that Tyranny and Slavery are bad things: But why shou'd we apprehend them from the Clergy at this time? Rites and Ceremonies we own are not Points of chief Moment, ment in Religion: But why shou'd we ridicule things in their own Nature, at least Innocent, and which bear the Stamp of Supreme Authority? That Men in Divinity, as well as other Subjects, are perplexed with useless Disputes, and are like to be fo as long as the World lasts I freely acknowledge! But why must all the Human Weakness and Mistakes of Clergymen be imputed to wicked Defigns? Why indifcriminately abuse their Character and Tenets? Is this like Candour, love of Truth, and Free-thinking? It is granted there may be found, now and then, spleen and ill-breeding in the Clergy: But are not the same Faults incident to English Laymen, of a retired Education and Country Life? I grant there is infinite Futility in the Schoolmen: But I deny that a Volume of that doth so much Mischief, as a Page of Minute Philosophy. That weak or wicked Men shou'd, by favour of the World, creep into power and high Stations in the Church, is nothing wonderful: And that in fuch Stations they shou'd behave like themselves, is natural to suppose. But all the while it is evident, that not the Gospel but the World, not the Spirit but the Flesh, not God but the Devil, puts them upon their unworthy Atchievements. We make no difficulty to grant, that nothing is more infamous than Vice and Ignorance in a Clergyman; nothing more base than a Hypocrite, more frivolous than a Pedant, more cruel than an Inquisitor. But it must be also granted by you, Gentlemen, that nothing is more ridiculous and abfurd, than for pedantic, ignorant, and corrupt Men to cast the first Stone, at every shadow of their own Defects and Vices in other Men.

XXXV. ALC. When I consider the detestable State of Slavery and Superstition, I feel my Heart dilate and expand it self to grasp that inestimable blessing

bleffing of Liberty, absolute Liberty in its utmost unlimited Extent. This is the facred and high Prerogative, the very life and health of our English Constitution. You must not therefore think it strange if with a vigilant and curious Eye, we guard it against the minutest Appearance of Evil-You must even suffer us to cut round about, and very deep, and make use of the magnifying Glass the better to view and extirpate every the least fpeck, which shall discover it felf in what we are careful and jealous to preferve, the Apple of our Eye. CRI. As for unbounded Liberty I leave it to Savages, among whom alone I believe it is to be found: for the reasonable legal Liberty of our Constitution, I most heartily and sincerely wish it may for ever subsist and flourish among us. You and all other Englishmen cannot be too vigilant, or too earnest, to preferve this goodly frame, or to curb and disapppoint the wicked Ambition of whoever, Laymen or Ecclesiastic, shall attempt to change our free and gentle Government into a flavish or severe one. But what Pretext can this afford for your Attempts against Religion, or indeed how can it be confistent with them? Is not the Protestant Religion a main part of our constitution? I remember to have heard a Foreigner remark, that we of this Island were very good Protestants, but no Christians. But whatever Minute Philosophers may wish, or Foreigners fay, it is certain our Laws speak a different Language. ALC. This puts me in mind of the wife reasoning of a sage Magistrate, who, being pressed by the Raillery and Arguments of an ingenious Man, had nothing to fay for his religion but that, ten Millions of People inhabiting the fame island might, whether right or wrong, if they thought good, establish Laws for the worshiping God in their Temples, and appealing to him in their Courts of Justice. And that

in case ten thousand ingenious Men shou'd publ lickly deride and trample on those Laws, it might be just and lawful for the faid ten Millions, to expel the faid ten thoufand ingenious Men out of their faid Island. EUPH. And pray, what and Iwer wou'd you make to this remark of the fage Magistrate? ALC. The answer is plain. By the Law of Nature, which is superior to all positive Institutions, Wit and Learning have a natural Right to command Folly and Ignorance. I fay, ingenious Men have by natural Right a Dominion over Fools. EUPH. What Dominion over the Laws and People of Great Britain, Minute Philosophers may be entitled to by Nature, I shall not dispute, but leave to be considered by the Pub-ALC. This Doctrine, it must be owned, was never thoroughly understood before our own times. In the last age Hobbes and his Followers, though otherwise very great Men, declared for the Religion of the Magistrate, probably because they were afraid of the Magistrate; but times are changed, and the Magistrate may now be afraid of us. CRI. I allow the Magistrate may well be afraid of you in one sense, I mean, afraid to trust This brings to my Thoughts a Passage on you. the trial of Leander for a capital Offence: That Gentleman having picked out and excluded from his Jury, by peremptory exception, all but fome Men of Fashion and Pleasure, humbly moved when Dorcon was going to kifs the Book, that he might declare upon Honour, whether he believed either God or Gospel. Dorcon, rather than hazard his Reputation as a Man of Honour and Free-thinker, openly avowed, that he believed in neither. Upon which the Court declared him unfit to ferve on a Jury. By the fame reason, so many were fet aside, as made it necessary to put off the Trial. We are very easy, replied Alciphron,

phron, about being trufted to ferve on Juries, if we can be admitted to ferve in lucrative Employments. CRI. But what if the Government shou'd injoin, that every one, before he was fworn into Office, shou'd make the same Declaration which Dorcon was required to make? ALC. God forbid! I hope there is no fuch Design on foot. CRI. Whatever Designs may be on foot, thus much is certain: The Christian Reformed Religion is a principal Part and Corner-stone of our free Constitution; and I verily think, the only thing that makes us deserving of Freedom, or capable of enjoving it. Freedom is either a Bleffing or a Curfe as Men Use it. And to me it seems, that if our Religion were once destroy'd from among us, and those Notions, which pass for Prejudices of a Christian Education, erased from the Minds of Britons, the best thing that cou'd befal us wou'd be the loss of our Freedom. Surely a People wherein there is fuch reftless Ambition, such high Spirits, fuch Animofity of Faction, fo great Interests in Contest, such unbounded Licence of Speech and Press, amidst so much Wealth and Luxury, nothing but those veteres avia, which you pretend to extirpate, cou'd have hitherto kept from ruin.

XXXVI. Under the Christian Religion this Nation hath been greatly improved. From a fort of Savages, we have grown civil, polite, and learned: we have made a decent and noble Figure both at home and abroad. And, as our Religion decreaseth, I am afraid we shall be found to have declined. Why then shou'd we persist in the dangerous Experiment? ALC. One wou'd think, Crita, you had forgot the many Calamities occasioned by Churchmen and Religion. CRI. And one wou'd think, you had forgot what was answered this very Day to that Objection. But, not to repeat eternally the same Things, I shall observe in the first place, That if we resect on the past State of Christendom.

Christendom, and of our Country in particular. with our Feuds and Factions subsisting while we were all of the fame Religion, for Instance, that of the White and Red Roses, so violent and bloody and of such long continuance; we can have no affurance that those ill-humours, which have fince fhewn themselves under the masque of Religion, wou'd not have broke out with some other Pretext, if this had been wanting. I observe in the fecond Place, that it will not follow from any Observations you make on our History, that the Evils accidentally occasioned by Religion, bear any Proportion either to the good Effects it hath produced, or the Evils it hath prevented. Lastly, I observe that the best things may by accident be the occasion of Evil; which accidental Effect is not, to speak properly and truly, produced by the good thing itself, but by some Evil thing, which, being neither Part, Property, nor Effect of it, happens to be joined with it. But I shou'd be ashamed to infift and enlarge on fo plain a Point, and shall only add that, whatever Evils this Nation might have formerly fustained from Superstition, no Man of common fense will say, the Evils felt or apprehended at present are from that Quarter. Priestcraft is not the reigning Distemper at this Day. And furely it will be owned, that a wife Man, who takes upon him to be vigilant for the public Weal, shou'd touch proper things at proper times, and not prescribe for a Surfeit when the Distemper is a Confumption. ALC. I think we have fufficiently difcussed the Subject of this Day's Conference. now, let Lysicles take it as he will, I must in regard to my own Character, as a fair impartial Adverfary, acknowledge there is fomething in what Crito hath faid upon the Ufefulness of the Christian Religion. I will even own to you that some of our Sect are for allowing it a Toleration. I remember, at a meeting of several ingenious Men, after much

much debate we came fuccessively to divers Refolutions. The first was, that no Religion ought to be tolerated in the State: But this on more mature thought was judged impracticable. The second was that all Religions shou'd be tolerated, but none countenanced, except Atheism: But it was apprehended, that this might breed Contentions among the lower fort of People. We came therefore to conclude in the third place, that some Religion or other should be established for the use of the Vulgar. And after a long Dispute what this Religion shou'd be, Lysis a brisk young Man, perceiving no figns of Agreement, proposed that the present Religion might be tolerated, till a better was found. But allowing it to be expedient, I can never think it true, fo long as there lie unanswerable Objections against it, which if you please, I shall take the Liberty to propose at our next meeting. To which we all agreed.

MATTON CONTROL CONTROL

The SIXTH DIALOGUE.

I. Points agreed. II. Sundry Pretences to Revelation. III. Uncertainty of Tradition. IV. Object and Ground of Faith. V. Some Books disputed, others evidently spurious. VI. Stile and Composition of Holy Scripture. VII. Difficulties occurring therein. VIII. Obscurity not always a Defect. IX. Inspiration neither impossible nor absurd. X. Objections from the Form and Matter of Divine Revelation, considered. XI. Insidelity an Effect of Narrowness and Prejudice. XII. Articles of Christian Faith not unreasonable. XIII. Guilt the natural Parent of Fear. XIV. Things unknown, reduced to the Standard of what Men know. XV. Prejudices against the Incarnation of the Son of God. XVI. Ignorance of the Divine Oeconomy, a Source of Difficulties. XVII. Wisdom of God, Foolishness

Foolishness to Man. XVIII. Reason, no blind XIX. Usefulness of Divine Revelation. Guide. XX. Prophecies, whence Obscure, XXI. Eastern Accounts of Time older than the Mosaic. XXII. The Humour of Ægyptians, Affyrians, Chaldeans, and other Nations extending their Antiquity beyond Truth, accounted for. XXIII. Reasons confirming the Mosaic Account. XXIV. Profane History inconsistent. XXV. Celsus, Prophyry, and Julian. XXVI. The Testimony of Josephus XXVII. Attestation of Jews and considered. Gentiles to Christianity. XXVIII. Forgeries and XXIX. Judgment and Attention of Herefies. Minute Philosophers. XXX. Faith and Miracles. XXXI. Probable Arguments a sufficient Ground of XXXII. The Christian Religion able Faith. to stand the Test of rational Inquiry.

HE following day being Sunday, our Philosophers lay long in bed, while the rest of us went to Church in the Neighouring Town. where we dined at Euphranor's, and after evening Service returned to the two Philosophers, whom we found in the Library. They told us, That, if there was a God, he was present every where, as well as at Church; and that if we had been ferving him one way, they did not neglect to do as much another; inalmuch as a free exercise of Reason must be allowed the most acceptable service and Worship, that a rational creature can offer to its Creator. However, faid Alcipbron, if you, Gentlemen, can but folve the difficulties, which I shall propose to-morrow morning, I promise to go to Church next Sunday. After some general converfation of this kind, we fate down to a light Supper, and the next morning affembled at the same place as the Day before, where being all feated, I obferved, that the foregoing Week our Conferences had been carried on for a longer time, and with less

less interruption than I had ever known, or well cou'd be, in town, where Mens hours are fo broken by visits, business, and amusements, that whoever is content to form his notions from converfation only, must needs have them very shatter'd and imperfect. And what have we got, replied Alciphron, by all these continued Conferences? For my part, I think my felf just where I was, with respect to the main point that divides us, the Truth of the Christian Religion. I answered, That so many points had been examined, discussed, and agreed between him and his adversaries, that I hoped to fee them come to an entire agreement in the end. For in the first place, said I, the principles and opinions of those who are called Free-thinkers, or Minute Philosophers, have been pretty clearly explained. It hath been also agreed, that Vice is not of that benefit to the Nation, which some Men imagine: That Virtue is highly useful to Mankind: But that the beauty of Virtue is not alone fufficient to engage them in the practice of it: That therefore the belief of a God and Providence ought to be encouraged in the State, and tolerated in good Company, as a ufeful notion. Further, it hath been proved that there is a God: That it is reasonable to Worship him: And that the Worship, Faith, and Principles prefcribed by the Christian Religion have a useful tendency. Admit, replied Alcipbron, addressing himself to Crito, all that Dion saith to be true: Yet this doth not hinder my being just where I was, with respect to the main point. Since there is nothing in all this that proves the Truth of the Christian Religion: Though each of those particulars enumerated may, perhaps, prejudice in its favour. I am therefore to suspect my self at prefent for a prejudiced person; prejudiced, I say, in favour of Christianity. This, as I am a lover Q3

of Truth, puts me upon my guard against deception. I must therefore look sharp, and well consi-

der every step I take.

II. CRI. You may remember Alcipbron, you proposed for the subject of our present conference the consideration of certain Difficulties and Objections, which you had to offer against the Christian Religion. We are now ready to hear and consider whatever you shall think fit to produce of that kind. Atheism, and a wrong notion of Christianity, as of something hurtful to Mankind, are great Prejudices; the removal of which may difpose a Man to argue with candour and submit to reasonable proof: But the removing Prejudices against an opinion, is not to be reckoned prejudicing in its favour. It may be hoped therefore, that you will be able to do justice to your cause, without being fond of it. ALC. O Crito! that Man may thank his stars to whom Nature hath given a sublime Soul, who can raise himself above popular opinions, and, looking down on the herd of Mankind, behold them scattered over the surface of the whole earth, divided and subdivided into numberless nations and Tribes, differing in Notions and Tenets, as in Language, Manners, and Drefs. The Man who takes a general view of the World and its inhabitants, from this lofty stand, above the reach of Prejudice, seems to breathe a purer air, and to fee by a clearer light: But how to impart this clear and extensive view to those who are wandering beneath in the narrow dark paths of Error! This indeed is a hard talk; but, hard as it is, I shall try if by any means,

Clara tuæ possim præpandere lumina menti. Lucret. Know then, that all the various Casts or Sects of the sons of Men have each their Faith and their religious System, germinating and sprouting forth from that common grain of Enthusiasm, which

is an original ingredient in the composition of Human Nature, they shall each tell of intercourse with the invisible World, Revelations from Heaven, divine Oracles, and the like. All which pretensions, when I regard with an impartial eye, it is impossible I shou'd assent to all, and I find within myself something that withholds me from affenting to any of them. For although I may be willing to follow, fo far as common Sense, and the Light of Nature lead; yet the same reason that bids me yield to rational proof, forbids me to admit opinions without proof. This holds in general against all Revelations whatsoever. And be this my first Objection against the Christian in particular. CRI. As this Objection supposes there is no proof or Reason for believing the Christian, if good reason can be affigned for such belief, it comes to nothing. Now I prefume you will grant, the authority of the reporter is a true and proper reason for believing reports: And the better this authority, the juster claim it hath to our assent: But the authority of God is on all accounts the best: Whatever therefore comes from God, it is most reasonable to believe.

III. ALC. This I grant, but then it must be proved to come from God. CRI. And are not Miracles, and the accomplishments of Prophecies, joined with the excellency of its Doctrine, a sufficient proof that the Christian Religion came from God? ALC. Miracles, indeed, wou'd prove something: But what proof have we of these Miracles? CRI. Proof of the same kind that we have or can have of any facts done a great way off, and a long time ago. We have authentic accounts transmitted down to us from eye-witnesses, whom we cannot conceive tempted to impose upon us by any humane Motive whatfoever; inafmuch as they acted therein contrary to their Interests, their Prejudices. Q 4

236 THE MINUTE Dial. VI dices, and the very Principles in which they had been nursed and educated. These accounts were confirmed by the unparallel'd fubversion of the City of Ferusalem, and the dispersion of the Fewish Nation, which is a standing testimony to the Truth of the Gospel, particularly of the Predictions of our bleffed Saviour. These accounts, within less than a Century, were spread throughout the World, and believed by great numbers of People. These fame accounts were committed to writing, tranflated into feveral languages, and handed down with the same respect and consent of Christians in the most distant Churches. Do you not see, said Alcipbron, staring full at Crito, that all this hangs by Tradition? And Tradition, take my word for it, gives but a weak hold: It is a chain, whereof the first links may be stronger than steel, and yet the last weak as wax, and brittle as glass. Imagine a picture copied successively by an hundred Painters, one from another; how like must the last copy be to the original! How lively and diftinct will an image be, after an hundred reflections between two parallel Mirrors! Thus like, and thus lively do I think a faint vanishing Tradition, at the end of fixteen or feventeen hundred years. Some Men have a false heart, others a wrong head; and where both are true, the memory may be treacherous. Hence there is still something added, fomething omitted, and fomething varied from the Truth: And the fum of many fuch additions, deductions, and alterations, accumulated for feveral ages, do, at the Foot of the account, make quite another thing. CRI. Ancient facts we may know by Tradition, oral or written: And this latter we may divide into two kinds, private and public, as Writings are kept in the hands of particular Men, or recorded in public Archieves. Now all these three forts of Tradition, for ought I can fee, concur to atteft the genuine antiquity of the Gospels. And they are strengthened by collateral evidence from Rites inflituted, Festivals obferved, and Monuments erected by ancient Chriflians, fuch as Churches, Baptisteries, and Sepulchres. Now allowing your objection holds against oral Tradition, singly taken, yet I can think it no fuch difficult thing to transcribe faithfully. And things once committed to writing, are fecure from flips of memory, and may with common care be preferved intire fo long as the Manuscript lasts: And this experience shews may be above a thousand years. The Alexandrine Manuscript is allowed to be above twelve hundred years old; and it is highly probable there were then extant copies four hundred years old. A Tradition therefore of above fixteen hundred years, need have only two or three links in its chain. And these links, notwithstanding that great length of time, may be very found and intire. Since no reasonable Man will deny, that an ancient Manufcript may be of much the fame credit now, as when it was first written. We have it on good authority, and it feems probable, that the primitive Christians were careful to transcribe copies of the Gospels and Epistles for their private use, and that other copies were preserved as public records, in the feveral Churches throughout the World, and that portions thereof were conflantly read in their affemblies. Can more be faid to prove the writings of Classic Authors, or ancient Records of any kind authentic? Alcipbron, addressing his discourfe to Euphranor, faid, It is one thing to filence an adverfary, and another to convince him. What do you think, Eupbranor? EUPH. Doubtless it ALC. But what I want, is to be convinced. EUPH. That Point is not so clear. ALC. But if a Man had ever fo much mind, he cannot be convinced vinced by probable arguments against Demonstra-

tion. EUPH. I grant he cannot.

IV. ALC. Now it is as evident as demonstration can make it, that no divine Faith can possibly be built upon Tradition. Suppose an honest credulous Countryman catechifed and lectured every Sunday by his Parish-Priest: It is plain he believes in the Parson, and not in God. He knows nothing of Revelations, and Doctrines, and Miracles. but what the Priest tells him. This he believes, and this Faith is purely humane. If you fay he has the Liturgy and the Bible for the foundation of his Faith, the difficulty still recurs. For as to the Liturgy, he pins his faith upon the civil Magistrate, as well as the Ecclesiastic: neither of which can pretend divine Inspiration. Then for the Bible, he takes both that and his Prayer-Book on trust from the Printer, who, he believes, made true Editions from true Copies. You fee then faith, but what faith? Faith in the Priest, in the Magistrate, in the Printer, Editor, Transcriber, none of which can with any pretence be called Divine. I had the hint from Cratylus: it is a shaft out of his quiver, and believe me, a keen one-EUPH. Let me take and make trial of this same shaft in my hands. Suppose then your Countryman hears a Magistrate declare the Law from the Bench, or suppose he reads it in a Statute Book. What think you, is the Printer or the Justice the true and proper object of his faith and Submission? Or do you acknowledge a higher authority whereon to found those loyal acts, and in which they do really terminate? Again suppose you read a passage in Tacitus that you believe true; wou'd you fay you affented to it on the authority of the Printer or Transcriber rather than the Historian? ALC. Perhaps I wou'd, and perhaps I wou'd not. I do not think my felf obliged to answer these points. What

What is this but transferring the question from one subject to another? That which we considered was neither Law nor profane History, but religious Tradition, and Divine Faith. I fee plainly what you aim at, but shall never take for an answer to one difficulty, the starting of another. CRI. O Alcibbron, there is no taking hold of you who expect that others shou'd (as you were pleased to express it) hold fair and stand firm, while you plucked out their prejudices: How shall he argue with you but from your concessions, and how can he know what you grant except you will be pleafed to tell him? EUPH. But to fave you the trouble, for once I will suppose an answer. My question admits but of two answers; take your Choice. From the one it will follow, that by a parity of reason we can easily conceive, how a Man may have Divine Faith, though he never felt Inspiration, or faw a Miracle: inafmuch as it is equally possible, for the mind, through whatever conduit, oral or fcriptural, divine Revelation be derived, to carry its thought and submission up to the source and terminate its faith, not in Humane but Divine authority: not in the instrument or vessel of conveyance, but in the great origine it felf as its proper and true object. From the other answer it will follow, that you introduce a general scepticism. into Humane Knowledge, and break down the hinges on which civil Government, and all the affairs of the World turn and depend; in a word that you wou'd destroy Humane Faith to get rid. of Divine. And how this agrees with your professing that you want to be convinced I leave you to consider.

V. ALC. I shou'd in earnest be glad to be convinced one way or other, and to come to some conclusion. But I have so many objections in store, you are not to count much upon getting over one.

Depend

240 THE MINUTE Dial. VI. Depend on it you shall find me behave like a Gentleman and lover of Truth. I will propose my objections briefly and plainly, and accept of reafonable answers as fast as you can give them. Come, Euphranor, make the most of your Tradition; you can never make that a constant and univerfal one, which is acknowledged to have been unknown, or at best disputed in the Church for feveral Ages: And this is the Case of the Canon of the new Testament. For though we have now a Canon as they call it fettled; yet every one must fee and own that Tradition cannot grow stronger by Age; and that what was uncertain in the primitive times cannot be undoubted in the fublequent. What say you to this, Eupbranor? EUPH. I should be glad to conceive your meaning clearly before I return an answer. It seems to me this objection of yours supposeth, that where a Tradition bath been constant and undisputed, such Tradition may be admitted as a proof, but that where the Tradition is defective, the proof must be fo too. Is this your meaning? ALC. It is. EUPH. Consequently the Gospels and Epistles of St. Paul, which were univerfally received in the beginning, and never fince doubted of by the Church, must, notwithstanding this objection, be in reason admitted for genuine. And if these Books contain, as they really do, all those points that come into controverly between you and me; what need I dispute with you about the authority of some other Books of the new Testament, which came later to be generally known and received in the Church? If a Man affents to the undifputed Books he is no longer an Infidel; though he shou'd not hold the Revelations, or the Epistle of S. James or Jude, or the latter of S. Peter, or the two last of S. John to be Canonical. The additional authority of these portions of Holy Scripture

Scripture may have its weight, in particular controversies between Christians, but can add nothing to arguments against an Infidel as such. Wherefore though I believe good reasons may be assigned for receiving these Books, yet these reasons seem now beside our purpose. When you are a Christian it will be then time enough to argue this point. And you will be the nearer being fo, if the way be shorten'd by omitting it for the present. ALC. Not so near neither as you perhaps imagine: For. notwithstanding all the fair and plausible things you may fay about Tradition, when I confider the Spirit of Forgery which reigned in the primitive times, and reflect on the feveral Gospels, Acts, and Epiftles attributed to the Apostles, which yet are acknowledged to be spurious, I confess, I cannot help suspecting the whole. EU. H. Tell me. Alciphron, do you suspect all Plato's Writings for fpurious, because the Dialogue upon Death, for instance is allowed to be so? Or will you admit none of Tully's Writings to be genuine, because Sigonius imposed a Book of his own writing for Tully's Treatife de Confolatione, and the imposture passed for some time on the World? ALC. Suppose I admit for the Works of Tully and Plato those that commonly pass for such. What then? EUFH. Why then I wou'd fain know, whether it be equal and impartial in a Free-thinker, to measure the credibility of profane and sacred Books by a different rule. Let us know upon what foot we Christians are to argue with Minute Philosophers; whether we may be allowed the benefit of common maxims in Logic and Criticism? If we may, be pleased to assign a reason why supposititious Writings, which in the style and manner and matter bear visible marks of imposture, and have accordingly been rejected by the Church, can be made an argument against those which have been univerfally

univerfally received, and handed down by an unanimous constant Tradition. There have been in all Ages and in all great Societies of Men, many capricious, vain or wicked Impostors, who for different ends have abused the World by spurious Writings, and created work for Critics both in profane and facred Learning. And it would seem as silly to reject the true Writings of profane Authors for the sake of the spurious, as it wou'd seem unreasonable to suppose, that among the Hereticks and several Sects of Christians, there shou'd be

none capable of the like Imposture.

VI. ALC. But, be the Tradition ever fo well attested, and the Books ever so genuine, yet I cannot suppose them wrote by persons divinely inspired, fo long as I fee in them certain Characters inconfistent with such a supposition. Surely the purest language, the most perfect style, the exactest method, and in a word all the excellencies of good writing, might be expected in a piece composed or dictated by the Spirit of God: But Books, wherein we find the reverse of all this, it were impious, not, to reject, but, to attribute to the Divinity. EUPH. Say, Alcipbron, are the Lakes, the Rivers, or the Ocean bounded by straight Lines? Are the Hills and Mountains exact Cones or Pyramids? or the Stars cast into regular figures? ALC. They are not. EUPH. But in the works of Infects, we may observe figures as exact as if they were drawn by the rule and compass. ALC. We may. EUPH. Shou'd it not seem therefore that a regular exactness, or scrupulous attention to what Men call the rules of art, is not observed in the great productions of the Author of ALC. It shou'd. EUPH. And when a great Prince declareth his Will in Laws and Edicts to his Subjects, is he careful about a pure style or elegant composition? Does he not leave his Secretaries and Clerks to express his sense in their own words? Is not the phrase on such occasions thought proper if it conveys as much as was intended? And wou'd not the divine strain of certain modern Critics be judged affected and improper for such uses? ALC. It must be owned, Laws and Edicts and Grants, for Solecism and Tautology, are very offensive to the harmonious ears of a fine Writer. EUPH. Why then shou'd we expect in the Oracles of God an exactness, that wou'd be misbecoming and beneath the dignity of an earthly Monarch, and which bears no proportion or refemblance to the magnificent works of the Creation? ALC. But granting that a nice regard to particles and critical rules is a thing too little and mean to be expected in Divine Revelations; and that there is more force and spirit and true greatness in a negligent, unequal flyle, than in the well-turned periods of a polite writer; Yet what is all this to the bald and flat compositions of those you call the Divine Penmen? I can never be persuaded, the supreme Being wou'd pick out the poorest and meanest of scriblers for his Secretaries. EUPH. O Alcipbron, if I durst follow my own judgment, I shou'd be apt to think there are noble beauties in the style of the Holy Scripture: in the narrative parts a strain so simple and unaffected; in the devotional and prophetic, fo animated and fublime: and in the doctrinal parts fuch an air of dignity and authority as feems to fpeak their original divine. But I shall not enter into a dispute about Taste; much less set up my judgment on so nice a point against that of the wits, and Men of genius, with which your Sect abounds. And I have no temptation to it, inafmuch as it feems to me. the Oracles of God are not the less so for being delivered in a plain dress rather than in the enticing words of Man's wisdom. ALC. This may perhaps in writing.

VII. But what apology can be made for Non-fense, crude Nonsense? Of which I cou'd easily affign many instances, having once in my Life read the Scripture through with that very view. Look here, said he, opening a Bible, in the forty ninth Psalm, the Author begins very magnificently, calling upon all the inhabitants of the Earth to give ear, and assuring them his mouth shall speak of wisdom, and the meditation of his heart shall be of understanding.

Quid dignum tanto feret bic promissor biatu?

He hath no fooner done with his Preface, but he puts this senseless question. " Wherefore shou'd I fear in the days of evil; when the wickedness " of my heels shall compass me about?" The iniquity of my heels! What Nonfense after such a folemn Introduction! EUPH. For my own part. I have naturally weak eyes, and know there are many things that I cannot fee, which are nevertheless distinctly seen by others. I do not therefore conclude a thing to be absolutely invisible; because it is fo to me: And fince it is possible it may be with my understanding, as it is with my eyes, I dare not pronounce a thing to be Nonfense, because I do not understand it. Of this passage many interpretations are given. The word render'd heels may fignify fraud or fupplantation: By fome it is translated past wickedness, the heel being the hinder part of the foot; by others iniquity in the end of my days, the heel being one extremity of the body; by some the iniquity of my Enemies that may supplant me; by others my own faults or iniquities which I have passed over as light matters, and trampled under my feet. Some render it the iniquity of my ways; others my transgreffions which are like flips and flidings of the heel: And

And after all might not this expression so harsh and odd to English ears have been very natural and obvious in the Hebrew Tongue, which, as every other Language, had its idioms? the force and propriety whereof may as eafily be conceived loft in a long tract of time, as the fignification of some Hebrew words, which are not now intelligible, though no body doubts but they had once a meaning as well as the other words of that Language. Granting therefore that certain passages in the Holy Scripture may not be understood, it will not thence follow that its Penmen wrote Nonfense: For I conceive Nonfense to be one thing and unintelligible another. CRI. An English Gentleman of my acquaintance one day entertaining some Foreigners at his House, sent a Servant to know the occasion of a sudden tumult in the yard, who brought him word, the Horfes were fallen together by the ears: his Guests inquiring what the matter was, he translates it literally; Les Chevaux font tombez ensemble par les oreilles. Which made them stare; what expressed a very plain sense in the original English, being incomprehensible when rendered word for word into French: And I remember to have heard a Man excuse the bulls of his Countrymen, by supposing them so many literal translations. EUPH. But not to grow tedious, I refer to the Critics and Commentators where you will find the use of this remark, which clearing up feveral obscure passages you took for Nonfense, may possibly incline you to fuspect your own judgment of the rest. In this very Pfalm you have pitched on, the good fenfe and moral contained in what follows, shou'd, methinks, make a candid reader judge favourably of the original fense of the Author, in that part which he cou'd not understand. Say, Aleiphron, in reading the Classics, do you forthwith conclude every R passage

THE MINUTE Dial. VI. 246 passage to be Nonsense, that you cannot make fense of? ALC. By no means; difficulties must be supposed to rise from different idioms, old cuftoms, hints and allusions, clear in one time or place, and obscure in another. EUPH. And why will you not judge of Scripture by the same rule. Those sources of obscurity you mention are all common both to facred and profane Writings: And there is no doubt, but an exacter knowledge in Language and Circumstances wou'd in both. cause difficulties to vanish like shades before the light of the Sun. Feremiab to describe a furious invader faith; Behold be shall come up as a Lion from the fwelling of Jordan against the babitation of the frong. One wou'd be apt to think this passage odd and improper, and that it had been more reafonable to have faid, a Lion from the mountain or the defart. But travellers, as an ingenious Man observes, who have seen the River Fordan bounded by low Lands with many reeds or thickets affording shelter to wild Beasts, (which being suddenly dislodged by a rapid overflowing of the River. rush into the upland Country) perceive the force and propriety of the Comparison; and that the difficulty proceeds, not from Nonfense in the Writer, but from Ignorance in the Reader. It is needless to amass together Instances which may be found in every Commentator: I only beg leave to observe, that sometimes Men, looking higher or deeper than they need for a profound or remote fenfe, overlook the natural obvious fenfe, lying, if I may fo fay, at their feet, and fo make difficulties instead of finding. This feems to be the case of that celebrated passage, which hath created so much work in St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians. 'What shall thy do which are baptized for the dead; if the dead rife not at all? why f are they then baptized for the dead?' I remem-

2.0.

ber to have heard this text explained by Laches the Vicar of our Parish to my Neighbour Lycon, who was much perplexed about its meaning. If it had been translated as it might very justly, baptized for the fake of the dead, I do not fee, faid Laches, why people shou'd be puzzled about the fense of this passage; for tell me, I beseech you, for whose sake do you think those Christians were baptized? For whose fake, answered Lycon, but their own? How do you mean, for their own fake in this life, or the next? Doubtless in the next, for it was plain they could get nothing by it in this. They were then, replied Laches, baptized not for the fake of themselves while living, but for the fake of themselves when dead; not for the living, but the dead. I grant it. Baptism therefore must have been to them a fruitless thing, if the dead rise not at all. It must. Whence Laches inferred. That St. Paul's argument was clear and pertinent for the Refurrection: And Lycon allowed it to be argumentum ad bominem to those who had fought Baptism. There is then, concluded Laches, no necessity for supposing, that living Men were in those days baptized instead of those who died without Baptism, or of running into any other odd Suppositions, or strained and far-fetched Interpretations to make sense of this passage. ALC. Here and there a difficult passage may be cleared: But there are many which no art or wit of Man can account for. What fay you to those discoveries, made by some of our learned Writers, of false citations from the Old Testament found in the Gospel? EUPH. That some few passages are cited by the Writers of the New Testament, out of the Old, and by the Fathers out of the New, which are not in fo many words to be found in them, is no new discovery of Minute Philosophers, but known and observed long before by Christian Wri-R 2

ters; who have made no scruple to grant, that fome things might have been inferted by careless or mistaken Transcribers into the Text, from the Margin, others left out, and others altered; whence fo many various readings. But these are things of fmall moment, and that all other ancient Authors have been subject to; and upon which no point of Doctrine depends, which may not be proved without them. Nay further, if it be any advantage to your cause, it hath been observed, that the eighteenth Pfalm, as recited in the twenty second chapter of the fecond book of Samuel, varies in above forty places, if you regard every little verbal or literal difference: And that a Critic may now and then discover small variations, is what no body can deny. But to make the most of these concessions, what can you infer from them, more than that the defign of the Holy Scripture was not to make us exactly knowing in Circumstantials? and that the Spirit did not dictate every Particle and Syllable, or preferve them from every minute alteration by Miracle? which to believe, wou'd look like Rabinical Superstition. ALC. But what marks of Divinity can possibly be in writings which do not reach the exactness even of Humane Art? EUPH. I never thought nor expected that the Holy Scripture shou'd shew it self divine, by a circumstantial accuracy of Narration, by exactness of Method, by firially observing the rules of Rhetoric, Grammar, and Criticism, in harmonious Periods, in elegant and choice Expressions, or in technical Definitions and Partitions. These things wou'd look too like a Humane Composition. Methinks there is in that simple unaffected, artless, unequal, bold, figurative Style of the Holy Scripture, a character fingularly great and majestic, and that looks more like divine Inspiration, than any other Composition that I know. But, as I said before, I shall I shall not dispute a point of Criticism with the gentlemen of your Sect, who, it feems, are the modern standard for Wit and Taste. ALC. Well, I shall not insist on small slips, or the inaccuracy of citing or transcribing: And I freely own, that Repetitions, want of Method, or want of Exactness in circumstances, are not the things that chiefly stick with me; no more than the plain patriarchal Manners, or the peculiar Usages and Customs of the Jews and first Christians so different from ours; and that to reject the Scripture on such accounts wou'd be to act like those French Wits, who censure Homer because they do not find in him the Style, Notions and Manners of their own Age and Country. Was there nothing elfe to divide us, I shou'd make no great difficulty of owning, That a popular uncorrect Style might answer the general ends of Revelation, as well, perhaps, as a more critical and exact one: But the Obscurity still sticks with me. Methinks if the supreme Being had spoke to Man, he wou'd have spoke clearly to him, and that the Word of God shou'd not need a comment.

VIII. EUPH. You feem, Alcipbron, to think Obscurity a defect; but if it shou'd prove to be no defect, there wou'd then be no force in this Objection. ALC. I grant there wou'd not. EUPH. Pray tell me, are not Speech and Style instrumental to convey Thoughts and Notions, to beget Knowledge, Opinion, and Affent? ALC. This is true. EUPH. And is not the perfection of an instrument to be measured by the use to which it is fubservient? ALC. It is. EUPH. What therefore is a defect in one instrument, may be none in another. For instance, edged tools are in general defigned to cut; but the uses of an Ax and a Razor being different, it is no defect in an Ax, that it hath not the keen edge of a Razor; nor in R 3 a Razor.

THE MINUTE Dial. VI. 250 a Razor, that it hath not the weight or strength of an Ax. ALC. I acknowledge this to be true. EUPH. And may we not fay in general, that every instrument is perfect, which answers the purpose or intention of him who useth it? ALC. We may. EUPH. Hence it feems to follow, that no Man's Speech is defective in point of Clearness, though it shou'd not be intelligible to all Men, if it be fufficiently fo to those who, he intended, shou'd understand it; or though it shou'd not in all parts be equally clear, or convey a perfect knowledge, where he intended only an imperfect hint. ALC. It feems fo. EUPH. Ought we not therefore to know the intention of the Speaker, to be able to know whether his style be obscure through defect or defign? ALC. We ought. EUPH. But is it possible for Man to know all the ends and purposes of God's Revelations? ALC. It is not. EUPH. How then can you tell, but the obscurity of some parts of Scripture may well confift with the purpose which you know not, and confequently be no argument against its coming from God? The books of Holy Scripture were written in ancient languages, at distant times, on fundry occasions, and very different subjects: Is it not therefore reasonable to imagine, that some parts or passages might have been clearly enough understood by those, for whose proper use they were principally defigned, and yet feem obscure to us, who fpeak another language, and live in other times? Is it at all abfurd or unsuitable to the notion we have of God or Man, to suppose that God may reveal, and yet reveal with a referve, upon certain remote and fublime fubjects, content to give us hints and glimpfes, rather than views? May we not also suppose from the reason of things, and the analogy of Nature, that some points, which might otherwise have been more clearly explained,

plained, were left obscure meerly to encourage our diligence and modesty? Two virtues, which, if it might not feem difrespectful to such great Men, I wou'd recommend to the Minute Philosophers. Lysicles replied, This indeed is excellent: You expect that Men of fense and spirit shou'd in great humility put out their eyes, and blindly fwallow all the absurdities and nonsense that shall be offered to them for divine Revelation. EUPH. On the contrary, I wou'd have them open their eyes, look sharply, and try the Spirit, whether it is of God; and not supinely and ignorantly condemn in the gross, all Religions together, Piety with Superstition, Truth for the fake of Error, matters of Fact for the fake of Fictions; a conduct, which at first fight wou'd feem absurd in History, Physick, or any other branch of Humane Inquiry: But to compare the Christian System, or Holy Scriptures, with other pretences to divine Revelation, to consider impartially the Doctrines, Precepts, and Events therein contained; weigh them in the balance with any other religious, natural, moral, or historical accounts; and diligently to examine all those proofs internal and external, that for fo many ages have been able to influence and persuade so many wife, learned and inquisitive Men: Perhaps they might find in it certain peculiar characters, which fufficiently distinguish it from all other Religions and pretended Revelations, whereon to ground a reasonable Faith. In which case I leave them to consider, whether it wou'd be right to reject with peremptory fcorn a Revelation fo diffinguished and attested, upon account of Obscurity in some parts of it? and whether it wou'd feem beneath Men of their Sense and Spirit to acknowledge, that, for ought they know, a light inadæquate to things, may yet be adæquate to the purpose of Providence? and where R 4 the

ther it might be unbecoming their fagacity and critical skill to own, that literal Translations from Books in an ancient Oriental tongue, wherein there are fo many peculiarities, as to the manner of writing, the figures of Speech, and structure of the Phrase, so remote from all our modern Idioms, and in which we have no other coæval writings extant, might well be obscure in many places, especially fuch as treat of subjects sublime and difficult in their own nature, or allude to things, customs or events, very distant from our knowledge? And lastly, whether it might not become their character, as impartial and unprejudiced Men, to consider the Bible in the same light they wou'd profane Authors? They are apt to make great allowance for Transpositions, Omissions, and literal Errors of Transcribers in other ancient Books, and very great for the difference of Style and Manner, especially in eastern Writings, such as the remains of Zoroaster and Confucius, and why not in the Prophets? In reading Horace or Persius to make out the fense, they will be at the pains to discover a hidden Drama, and why not in Solomon or St. Paul? I hear there are certain ingenious Men who despise King David's Poetry, and yet profess to admire Homer and Pindar. If there be no prejudice or affectation in this, let them but make a literal version from those Authors into English Profe, and they will then be better able to judge of the Psalms. ALC. You may discourse and exspatiate; but notwithstanding all you have said or shall fay, it is a clear point that a Revelation, which doth not reveal, can be no better than a contradiction in terms, EUPH. Tell me Alciphron, do you not acknowledge the light of the Sun to be the most glorious production of Providence in this natural World? ALC. Suppose I do. EUPH. This light, nevertheless, which you cannot deny to be of God's making, shines only on the furface of things, shines not at all in the Night, thines imperfectly in the twilight, is often interrupted, refracted, and obscured, represents distant things, and small things dubiously, imperfectly, or not at all. Is this true or no? ALC It is. EUPH. Shou'd it not follow therefore, that to expect in this World a light from God without any mixture of shade or mystery, wou'd be departing from the rule and analogy of the Creation? and that consequently it is no argument the light of Revelation is not Divine, because it may not be so clear and full as you expect. ALC. As I profess my felf candid and indifferent throughout this debate, I must needs own you say some plausible things, as a Man of argument will never fail to do in vindication of his prejudices.

IX. But, to deal plainly, I must tell you once for all, that you may question and answer, illustrate and enlarge for ever, without being able to convince me that the Christian Religion is of Divine Revelation. I have faid feveral things, and have many more to fay, which, believe me, have weight not only with my felf, but with many great Men my very good friends, and will have weight whatever Euphranor can fay to the contrary. EUPH. O Alcipbron, I envy you the happiness of such acquaintance. But, as my lot fallen in this remote corner deprives me of that advantage, I am obliged to make the most of this opportunity, which you and Lysicles have put into my hands. I confider you as two able Chirurgeons, and you were pleased to consider me as a Patient, whose cure you have generously undertaken. Now a Patient must have full liberty to explain his case, and tell all his Symptoms, the concealing or palliating of which might prevent a perfect cure. You will be pleased therefore to understand me, not as object-

THE MINUTE Dial. VI ing to, or arguing against, either your Skill or Medicines, but only as fetting forth my own cafe and the effects they have upon me. Say, Alciphron, did you not give me to understand that you wou'd extirpate my prejudices? ALC. It is true: a good Physician eradicates every fibre of the difeafe. Come, you shall have a patient hearing. EUPH. Pray, was it not the opinion of Plato. that God inspired particular Men, as Organs of Trumpets, to proclaim and found forth his Oracles to the World?* And was not the same opinion also embraced by others the greatest Writers of Antiquity? CRI. Socrates feems to have thought that all true Poets spoke by Inspiration: and Tully, that there was no extraordinary Genius without it. This hath made some of our affected Free-thinkers attempt to pass themselves upon the World for Enthusiasts. ALC. What wou'd you infer from all this? EUPH. I wou'd infer that Inspiration shou'd feem nothing impossible or abfurd, but rather agreeable to the light of reason and the notions of Mankind. And this, I suppose, you will acknowledge, having made it an Objection against a particular Revelation, that there are so many pretences to it throughout the World. ALC. O Euphranor, he who looks into the bottom of things, and resolves them into their first principles, is not eafily amused with words. The word Inspiration founds indeed big, but let us, if you please, take an original view of the thing fignified by it. To inspire is a word borrowed from the Latin, and strictly taken means no more than to breathe or blow in: nothing therefore can be inspired but what can be blown or breathed, and nothing can be fo but wind or vapour, which indeed may fill or puff up Men with fanatical and hypochondriacal ravings. This fort of, Inspiration I very

I very readily admit, EUPH. What you fay is fubtle, and I know not what effect it might have upon me, if your profound discourse did not hinder its own operation. ALC. How fo? EUPH. Tell me, Alcipbron, do you discourse or do you not? To me it feems that you discourse admirably. ALC. Be that as it will, it is certain I difcourfe. EUPH. But when I endeavour to look into the bottom of things, behold! A scruple riseth in my mind how this can be; for to discourse is a word of Latin derivation, which originally fignifies to run about; and a Man cannot run about. but he must change place and move his Legs; so long therefore as you fit on this Bench, you cannot be faid to discourse. Solve me this difficulty, and then perhaps I may be able to folve yours. ALC. You are to know, that discourse is a word borrowed from fenfible things, to express an invifible action of the mind, reasoning or inferring one thing from another; and in this translated fense, we may be said to discourse, though we sit EUPH. And may we not as well conceive. that the term Inspiration might be borrowed from fenfible things to denote an action of God, in an extraordinary manner, influencing, exciting, and enlightening the mind of a Prophet or an Apostle? who, in this fecondary, figurative, and tramlated fense, may truly be faid to be inspired, though there shou'd be nothing in the case of that wind or vapour implied in the original fense of the word? It feems to me, that we may by looking into our own minds plainly perceive certain instincts, impulses, and tendencies, which at proper periods and occasions spring up unaccountably in the Soul of Man. We observe very visible signs of the fame in all other Animals. And these things being ordinary and natural, what hinders but we may conceive it possible for the humane Mind, up-

on an extraordinary account, to be moved in an extraordinary manner, and its faculties stirred up and actuated by a supernatural Power? That there are and have been, and are likely to be wild vifions and hypochondriacal ravings, no body can deny; but to infer from thence, that there are no true Inspirations wou'd be too like concluding, that some Men are not in their senses, because other Men are fools. And though I am no Prophet, and confequently cannot pretend to a clear notion of this matter; yet I shall not therefore take upon me to deny, but a true Prophet or inspired Person, might have had as certain means, of discerning between divine Inspiration and hypochondriacal fancy, as you can between fleeping and waking, till you have proved the contrary. You may meet in the Book of Feremiab with this paffage: ' The Prophet that hath a dream let him tell a dream: And he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully: what is the chaff to the Wheat, faith the Lord? Is not my word ! like as a fire, faith the Lord, and like a ham-• mer that breaketh the rock in pieces'? * You fee here a distinction made between Wheat and Chaff, true and spurious, with the mighty force and power of the former. But I beg pardon for quoting Scripture to you, I make my appeal to the general fense of Mankind, and the Opinion of the wifest Heathens, which seems sufficient to conclude Divine Inspiration possible, if not probable, at least till you prove the contrary.

X. ALC. The possibility of Inspirations and Revelations I do not think it necessary to deny. Make the best you can of this concession. EUPH. Now what is allowed possible we may suppose in fact. ALC. We may. EUPH. Let us then suppose, that God had been pleased to make a Reve-

lation

lation to Men; and that he inspired some as a means to instruct others. Having supposed this, can you deny, that their inspired Discourses and Revelations might have been committed to Writing, or that being written, after a long tract of time they might become in feveral places obscure; that some of them might even originally have been less clear than others, or that they might fuffer some alteration by frequent transcribing, as other Writings are known to have done? Is it not even very probable that all these things wou'd happen? ALC. I grant it. EUPH. And granting this, with what pretence can you reject the Holy Scriptures as not being divine, upon the account of fuch figns or marks, as you acknowledge wou'd probably attend a Divine Revelation transmitted down to us through fo many Ages? ALC. But allowing all that in reason you can desire, and granting that this may account for some obscurity. may reconcile some small differences, or satisfy us how some difficulties might arise by inserting, omitting or changing here and there a letter, a word, or perhaps a fentence: Yet these are but fmall matters, in respect of the much more considerable and weighty objections I cou'd produce. against the confessed doctrines, or subject matter of those Writings. Let us see what is contained in these sacred Books, and then judge whether it is probable or possible, such Revelations shou'd ever have been made by God? Now I defy the wit of Man to contrive any thing more extravagant, than the accounts we there find of Apparitions, Devils, Miracles, God manifest in the flesh, Regeneration, Grace, Self-denial, Refurrection of the dead, and fuch like agri fomnia: things fo odd. unaccountable, and remote from the apprehenfion of Mankind, you may as foon wash a Blackamore white, as clear them of absurdity. No criti-

cal skill can justify them, no tradition recommend them, I will not fay for Divine Revelations, but even for the inventions of Men of Senfe. EUPH. I had always a great opinion of your fagacity, but now, Alcipbron, I consider you as fomething more than Man; elfe how shou'd it be possible for you to know, what or how far it may be proper for God to reveal? Methinks it may confift with all due deference to the greatest of Humane Understandings, to suppose them ignorant of many things, which are not fuited to their faculties, or lie out of their reach. Even the Counsels of Princes lie often beyond the ken of their Subjects, who can only know fo much as is revealed by those at the helm; and are often unqualified to judge of the usefulness and tendency even of that. till in due time the scheme unfolds, and is accounted for by fucceeding events. That many points contained in holy Scripture are remote from the common apprehensions of Mankind, cannot be denied. But I do not see, that it follows from thence they are not of Divine Revelation. On the contrary, shou'd it not feem reasonable to suppose, that a Revelation from God shou'd contain something different in kind, or more excellent in degree, than what lay open to the common fense of Men, or cou'd even be discovered by the most sagacious Philosopher? Accounts of separate Spirits, good or bad, Prophefies, Miracles and fuch things are undoubtedly strange; but I wou'd fain fee how you can prove them impossible or abfurd, ALC. Some things there are so evidently absurd, that it wou'd be almost as filly to disprove them. as to believe them: and I take thefe to be of that class.

XI. EUPH. But is it not possible, some Men may shew as much prejudice and narrowness in rejecting all such accounts, as others might easiness

Dial. VI. PHILOSOPHER. and credulity in admitting them? I never durft make my own observation or experience, the rule and measure of things spiritual, supernatural, or relating to another World, because I shou'd think it a very bad one, even for the visible and natural things of this; It wou'd be judging like the Siamele, who was positive it did not freeze in Holland, because he had never known such a thing as hard water or ice in his own Country. I cannot comprehend why any one, who admits the union of the Soul and Body, shou'd pronounce it imposfible for the Humane Nature to be united to the Divine, in a manner ineffable and incomprehenfible by Reason. Neither can I see any absurdity in admitting, that finful Man may become regenerate or a new Creature, by the grace of God reclaiming him from a carnal Life to a spiritual Life of Virtue and Holiness. And fince, the being governed by Sense and Appetite is contrary to the happiness and perfection of a rational Creature, I do not at all wonder that we are prescribed Self-As for the Resurrection of the dead, I do not conceive it so very contrary to the Analogy of Nature, when I behold Vegetables left to rot in the earth, rise up again with new Life and Vigour. or a Worm to all appearance dead change its Nature, and that, which in its first being crawled on the Earth, become a new species, and fly abroad with Wings. And indeed when I consider, that the Soul and Body are things fo very different and heterogeneous, I can fee no reason to be positive, that the one must necessarily be extinguished upon the diffolution of the other; especially fince I find in my felf a strong natural defire of Immorta. lity, and I have not observed that natural Appetites are wont to be given in vain, or meerly to be frustrated. Upon the whole those points, which you

you account extravagant and abfurd, I dare not pronounce to be fo till I fee good reason for it.

XII. CRI. No, Alcipbron, your positive airs must not pass for proofs; nor will it suffice to say, things are contrary to common fense, to make us think they are fo: By common Sense, I suppose shou'd be meant either the general sense of Mankind, or the improved reason of thinking Men. Now I believe that all those Articles, you have with so much capacity and fire at once summed up and exploded, may be shewn to be not disagreeable, much less contrary to common sense in one or other of these acceptations. That the Gods might appear and converse among Men, and that the Divinity might inhabit Humane Nature, were points allowed by the Heathens; and for this I appeal to their Poets and Philosophers, whose Testimonies are so numerous and clear, that it wou'd be an affront to repeat them to a Man of any Education. And though the notion of a Devil may not be fo obvious, or fo fully described, yet there appear plain traces of it, either from Reason or Tradition. The latter Platonists, as Porphyry and lamblichus, are very clear in the point, allowing that evil Dæmons delude and tempt, hurt and possess Mankind. That the ancient Greeks, Chaldeans, and Ægyptians, believed both good and bad Angels, may be plainly collected from Plato, Plutarch, and the Chaldean Oracles. Origen observes, That almost all the Gentiles, who held the being of Dæmons, allowed there were bad ones *. There is even fomething as early as Homer, that is thought by the learned Cardinal Beffarion + to allude to the fall of Satan, in the account of Ate, whom the Poet represents as cast down from Heaven by Fove, and then wandering about the Earth. doing

Origen. 1. 7. contra Celfum.

[†] In calumniat. Platonis. l. 3. c. 7.

^{*} Vid. Argum. in Phædrum Platonis.

[†] Vid. Plat. in Protag. & alibi passim.

and warily, than those who shall, with a consident air, pronounce them absurd, and repugnant to the Reason of Mankind. And in regard to a suture State, the common sense of the Gentile World, modern or ancient, and the opinions of the wisest Men of Antiquity, are things so well known, that I need say nothing about them. To me it seems, the Minute Philosophers, when they appeal to Reason and common Sense, mean only the Sense of their own Party: A coin, how current soever among themselves, that other Men will bring to the touchstone, and pass for no more than it is worth. LYS. Be those notions agreeable to what or whose Sense they may, they are not agreeable to mine. And if I am thought ignorant for this,

I pity those who think me so. XIII. I enjoy my felf, and follow my own courses, without remorse or fear; which I should not do, if my Head were filled with Enthusiasm; whether Gentile or Christian, Philosophical or Revealed, it is all one to me. Let others know or believe what they can, and make the best on't, I, for my part, am happy and fafe in my Ignorance. CRI. Perhaps not so fafe neither. LYS. Why, furely you won't pretend that Ignorance is criminal? CRI. Ignorance alone is not a crime. But that wilful Ignorance, affected Ignorance, Ignorance from Sloth, or conceited Ignorance, is a fault, might eafily be proved by the testimony of Heathen Writers; and it needs no proof to shew, that if Ignorance be our fault, we cannot be fecure in it as an excuse. LYS. Honest Crito seems to hint, that a Man shou'd take care to inform himself, while alive, left his neglect be punished when he is dead. Nothing is fo pufillanimous and unbecoming a Gentleman, as Fear: Nor cou'd you take a likelier course to fix and rivet a Man of honour in Guilt, than by attempting to frighten

him out of it. This is the stale, abfurd Stratagem of Priests, and that which makes them, and their Religion, more odious and contemptible to me than all the other Articles put together. CRI. I wou'd fain know why it may not be reasonable for a Man of honour, or any Man who has done amiss to fear? Guilt is the natural Parent of fear: and nature is not used to make men fear where there is no occasion. That impious and profane Men shou'd expect divine punishment, doth not feem fo abfurd to conceive: And that under this expectation they shou'd be uneasy and even afraid. how confiftent foever it may or may not be with honour, I am fure confifts with reason. That thing of Hell and eternal Punishment is the most absurd, as well as the most disagreeable thought that ever entered into the head of mortal Man. CRI. But you must own that it is not an absurdity peculiar to Christians, since Socrates, that great Free-thinker of Athens, thought it probable there may be fuch a thing as impious Men for ever punished in Hell *. It is recorded of this same Socrates, that he has been often known to think for four and twenty hours together, fixed in the fame posture, and wrapt up in meditation. LYS. Our modern Free-thinkers are a more lively fort of Men. Those old Philosophers were most of them whimfical. They had in my judgment a dry, narrow, timorous way of thinking, which by no means came up to the frank humour of our times. CRI. But I appeal to your own judgment, if a Man, who knows not the nature of the Soul, can be affured by the light of reason, whether it is mortal or immortal?

An simul intereat nobiscum morte perempta,
An tenebras orci visat vastasque lacunas?

LYS. But what if I know the nature of the Soul?

S 2 What

^{*} Vid. Platon. in Gorgia.

What if I have been taught that whole secret by a modern Free-thinker? a Man of science who discovered it not by a tiresome introversion of his faculties, not by amusing himself in a labyrinth of notions, or stupidly thinking for whole days and nights together, but by looking into things and

observing the analogy of nature.

XIV. This great Man is a Philosopher by fire. who has made many processes upon vegetables. It is his opinion that Men and Vegetables are really of the same species; that Animals are moving Vegetables, and Vegetables fixed Animals; that the mouths of the one and the roots of the other ferve to the fame use, differing only in position; that bloffoms and flowers answer to the most indecent and concealed parts in the humane body; that vegetable and animal bodies are both alike organized, and that in both there is Life or a certain motion and circulation of juices through proper Tubes or Vessels. I shall never forget this able Man's unfolding the nature of the Soul in the following manner. The Soul, faid he, is that specific form or principle from whence proceed the diffinct qualities or properties of things. Now, as Vegetables are a more simple and less perfect compound, and confequently more eafily analyfed than Animals, we will begin with the contemplation of the Souls of Vegetables. Know then, that the Soul of any Plant, Rosemary for instance, is neither more nor less than its effential Oil. Upon this depends its peculiar fragrance, tafte, and medicinal virtues, or in other words its life and ope-Separate or extract this effential Oil by Chymic art, and you get the Soul of the Plant: what remains being a dead Carcase, without any one property or virtue of the Plant, which is preserved entire in the Oil, a Drachm whereof goes further than feveral pounds of the Plant. this

this fame effential Oil is it felf a composition of Sulphur and Salt, or of a gross unctuous substance. and a fine fubtile principle or volatile Salt imprifoned therein. This volatile Salt is properly the effence of the Soul of the Plant, containing all its virtue, and the Oil is the vehicle of this most subtile part of the Soul, or that which fixes and individuates it. And as, upon separation of this Oil from the Plant, the Plant died, so a second death or death of the Soul enfues upon the resolution of this effential Oil into its principles; as appears by leaving it exposed for some time to the open air, fo that the volatile falt or Spirit may fly off; after which the Oil remains dead and infipid, but without any fensible diminution of its weight, by the loss of that volatile essence of the Soul, that æthereal aura, that spark of entity, which returns and mixes with the Solar light, the universal Soul of the World, and only fource of Life, whether Vegetable, Animal, or Intellectual; which differ only according to the groffness or fineness of the vehicles, and the different textures of the natural Alembics, or in other words, the organized Bodies, where the abovementioned volatile effence inhabits and is elaborated, where it acts and is acted upon. This Chymical System lets you at once into the nature of the Soul, and accounts for all it's phænomena. In that compound which is called Man, the Soul or effential Oil is what commonly goes by the name of Animal Spirit; for you must know, it is a point agreed by Chymists, that Spirits are nothing but the more subtile Oils. Now in proportion, as the effential Oil of Man is more fubtile than that of other Creatures, the volatile Salt that impregnates it is more at liberty to act, which accounts for those specifick properties and actions of Humane Kind, which distinguish them above other Creatures. Hence you S 3 may

266 THE MINUTE Dial VI may learn why among the wife ancients, Salt was another name for wit, and in our times a dull Man is faid to be infipid or infulfe. Aromatic Oils maturated by great length of time turn to Salts: this shews why Humane Kind, grow wifer by age. And what I have said of the twofold death or diffolution, first of the compound, by separating the Soul from the organical Body, and fecondly of the Soul it felf, by dividing the volatile Salt from the Oil, illustrates and explains that notion of certain ancient Philosophers: that as the Man was a compound of foul and body, fo the Soul was com- . pounded of the mind or intellect; and its æthereal vehicle; and that the separation of Soul and Body or death of the Man is, after a long tract of time, fucceeded by a fecond death of the Soul it felf, to wit the separation or deliverance of the intellect from its vehicle, and reunion with the Sun. EUPH. O Lysicles, your ingenious friend has opened a new Scene, and explained the most obscure and difficult points in the clearest and easiest manner. LYS. I must own this account of things struck my fancy. I am no great lover of Creeds or Systems; but when a notion is reasonable and grounded on experience I know how to value it. CRI. In good earnest, Lysicles, do you believe this account to be true? LYS. Why then in good earnest I don't know whether I do or no. But I can assure you the ingenious Artist himself has not the least doubt about it. And to believe an Artist in his art is a just maxim and short way to Science. CRI. But what relation hath the Soul of Man to Chymic art? The same reason, that bids me trust a skilful Artist in his art, inclines me to suspect him out of his art. Men are too apt to reduce unknown things to the standard of what they know, and bring a prejudice or tincture from things they have been converfant in, to judge thereby of things in

which they have not been conversant. I have known a Fidler gravely teach that the Soul was Harmony; a Geometrician very positive that the Soul must be extended; and a Physician, who having pickled half a dozen embryos and dissected as many Rats and Frogs, grew conceited and affirmed there was no Soul at all, and that it was a vulgar error. LYS. My notions sit easy. I shall not engage in pedantic disputes about them. They who don't like them may leave them. EUPH. This, I suppose, is said much like a Gentleman.

. XV. But pray, Lyficles, tell me whether the Clergy come within that general rule of yours: that an Artist may be trusted in his art? LYS. By no means. EUPH. Why fo? LYS. Because I take myself to know as much of those matters as they do. EUPH. But you allow, that in any other profession, one who hath spent much time and pains may attain more knowledge, than a Man of equal or better parts, who never made it his particular business. LYS. I do. EUPH. And nevertheless in things religious and divine you think all Men equally knowing. LYS. I do not fay all Men. But I think all Men of fense competent judges. EUPH. What! are the divine attributes and difpensations to Mankind, the true end and happiness of rational Creatures, with the means of improving and perfecting their Beings, more easy and obvious points than those which make the subject of every common profession? LYS. Perhaps not: but one thing I know, fome things are fo manifestly absurd, that no authority shall make me give into them. For instance, if all Mankind shou'd pretend to persuade me that the Son of God was born upon earth in a poor Family, was fpit upon, buffeted and crucified, lived like a Beggar and died like a Thief, I wou'd never believe one fyllable of it. Common Sense shews every one, what figure

2 marsh

(h)

it wou'd be decent for an earthly Prince or Ambaffador to make; and the fon of God, upon an ambassy from Heaven, must needs have made an appearance beyond all others of great eclat, and in all respects the very reverse of that which Jesus Christ is reported to have made, even by his own Historians. EUPH. O Lysicles, though I had ever fo much mind to approve and applaud your ingenious reasoning, yet I dare not affent to this for fear of Crito. LYS. Why fo? EUPH. Because he observed just now, that Men judge of things they do not know, by prejudices from things they do know. And I fear he wou'd object that you, who have been converfant in the grand Monde, having your head filled with a notion of Attendants and Equipage and Liveries, the familiar badges of Humane Grandeur, are less able to judge of that which is truly divine; and that one who had feen lefs, and thought more, wou'd be apt to imagine a pompous parade of worldly greatness, not the most becoming the Author of a spiritual Religion, that was designed to wean Men from the world, and raise them above it. CRI. Do you think, Lysicles, if a Man shou'd make his entrance into London in a rich suit of Clothes, with a hundred gilt Coaches, and a thousand laced Footmen; that this wou'd be a more divine appearance, and have more of true grandeur in it, than if he had power with a word to heal all manner of difeafes, to raise the dead to life, and still the raging of the Winds and Sea? LYS. Without all doubt it must be very agreeable to common fense to suppose, that he cou'd restore others to life who cou'd not fave his own. You tell us, indeed, that he rose again from the dead: but what occasion was there for him to die, the just for the unjust, the Son of God for wicked Men? and why in that individual place? Why at that very time above all others? Why

did he not make his appearance earlier, and preach in all parts of the World, that the benefit might have been more extensive? Account for all these points and reconcile them if you can, to the common notions and plain fense of Mankind. CRI. And what if those, as well as many other points, shou'd lie out of the road that we are acquainted with; must we therefore explode them, and make it a rule to condemn every proceeding as fenfelefs, that doth not square with the vulgar sense of Man; If the precepts and certain primary tenets of Religion appear in the Eye of Reason good and useful; and if they are found to be so by their effects; we may, for the fake of them, admit certain other points or doctrines recommended with them, to have a good tendency, to be right and true; although we cannot discern their goodness or truth by the meer light of Humane Reason, which may well be supposed an insufficient judge of the proceedings, counfels, and defigns of Providence, and this sufficeth to make our conviction reasonable.

XVI. It is an allowed point that no Man can judge of this or that part of a machine taken by it self, without knowing the whole, the mutual relation or dependence of its parts, and the end for which it was made. And, as this is a point acknowledged in corporeal and natural things, ought we not by a parity of reason to suspend our judgment of a fingle unaccountable part of the Divine Oeconomy, till we are more fully acquainted with the moral System, or world of Spirits, and are let into the defigns of God's Providence, and have an extensive view of his dispensations past, present, and future? Alas! Lysicles, what do you know even of yourfelf, whence you come, what you are, or whither you are going? To me it feems, that a Minute Philosopher is like a conceited Spectator, who never looked behind the Scenes, and yet wou'd

judge of the machinery; who from a transfert glimple of a part only of some one scene, wou'd take upon him to censure the plot of a Play. LYS. As to the plot I won't fay; but in half a Scene a Man may judge of an abfurd Actor. With what colour or pretext can you justify the vindictive, froward, whimfical behaviour of fome infpired Teachers or Prophets? Particulars that ferve neither for profit nor pleasure I make a shift to forget; but in general the truth of this charge I do very well remember. CRI. You need be at no pains to prove a point I shall neither justify nor deny. That there have been humane passions, infirmities, and defects in persons inspired by God, I freely own; nay, that very wicked Men have been inspired, as Balaam for instance and Caipbas, cannot be denied. But what will you infer from thence? Can you prove it impossible, that a weak or finful Man shou'd become an instrument to the Spirit of God, for conveying his purpose to other . Sinners? Or that Divine Light may not, as well as the light of the Sun, shine on a foul vessel without poluting its rays? LYS. To make short work. the right way wou'd be to put out our eyes, and not judge at all. CRI. I do not fay fo, but I think it wou'd be right, if some sanguine persons upon certain points suspected their own judgment. ALC. But the very things faid to be inspired, taken by themselves and in their own nature, are fometimes fo wrong, to fay no worfe, that a Man may pronounce them not to be divine at first fight: without troubling his head about the System of Providence or Connexion of Events: As one may fay that Grass is green, without knowing or considering how it grows, what uses it is subservient to, or how it is connected with the mundane System. Thus for instance, the spoiling of the Ægyptians. and the extirpation of the Canaanites, every one at

first glance sees to be cruel and unjust, and may therefore without deliberating pronounce them unworthy of God. CRI. But, Akipbron, to judge rightly of these things, may it not be proper to confider how long the Ifraelites had wrought under those severe Task-masters of Egypt, what injuries and hardships they had sustained from them, what crimes and abominations the Canaanites had been guilty of, what right God hath to dispose of the things of this World, to punish Delinquents, and to appoint both the manner and the instruments of his Justice? Man, who has not fuch right over his fellow-creatures, who is himself a fellow-sinner with them, who is liable to error as well as paffion, whose views are imperfect, who is governed more by Prejudice, than the Truth of things, may not improbably deceive himfelf, when he fets up for a judge of the proceedings of the holy, omniscient, impassive Creator and Governor of all things.

XVII. ALC. Believe me, Crito, Men are never fo industrious to deceive themselves, as when they engage to defend their Prejudices. You wou'd fain reason us out of all use of our Reason: Can any thing be more irrational? To forbid us to reafon on the Divine Dispensations, is to suppose, they will not bear the test of reason; or, in other words, that God acts without reason, which ought not to be admitted, no, not in any fingle instance: For if in one, why not in another? Whoever therefore allows a God, must allow that he always acts reasonably. I will not therefore attribute to him Actions and Proceedings that are unreasonable. He hath given me Reason to judge withal; and I will judge by that unerring Light, lighted from the universal lamp of Nature. CRI. O Alcipbron! as I frankly own the common remark to be true, That when a Man is against Reason, it is a shrewd fign Reason is against him; so I shou'd never go about to diffuade any one, much less one who fo well knew the value of it, from using that noble talent. On the contrary, upon all subjects of moment, in my opinion, a Man ought to use his Reason; but then, whether it may not be reafonable to use it with some deference to superior Reason, it will not, perhaps, be amiss to consider. ALC. It must furely derogate from the Wisdom of God, to suppose his conduct cannot bear being inspected, not even by the twilight of Humane Reason. EUPH. You allow, then, God to be wife? ALC. I do. EUPH. What! infinitely wife? ALC. Even infinitely. EUPH. His Wisdom, then, far exceeds that of Man. Vaftly. EUPH. Probably more than the Wifdom of Man, that of a Child. ALC. Without all question. EUPH. What think you, Alcipbron, must not the conduct of a Parent seem very unaccountable to a Child, when its inclinations are thwarted, when it is put to learn the Letters, when it is obliged to swallow bitter Physick, to part with what it likes, and to fuffer, and do, and fee many things done contrary to its own judgment, however reasonable or agreeable to that of others? ALC. This I grant. EUPH. Will it not therefore follow from hence by a parity of reason, that the little child, Man, when it takes upon it to judge of the Schemes of Parental Providence, and a thing of yesterday, to criticise the Occonomy of the Ancient of days? will it not follow, I fay, that such a judge, of such matters, must be apt to make very erroneous judgments? esteeming those things in themselves unaccountable, which he cannot account for; and concluding of some certain points, from an appearance of arbitrary carriage towards him, which is fuited to his infancy and ignorance, that they are in themselves capricious or absurd, and cannot proceed from a wife.

wife, just, and benevolent God. This fingle confideration, if duly attended to, wou'd, I verily think, put an end to many conceited reasonings ALC. You wou'd against Revealed Religion. have us then conclude, that things, to our wisdom unaccountable, may nevertheless proceed from an abyss of Wisdom which our line cannot fathom: and that prospects viewed but in part, and by the broken tinged light of our Intellects, though to us they may feem disproportionate and monstrous, may nevertheless appear quite otherwise to another eye, and in a different fituation: In a word, that as Humane Wisdom is but childish Folly, in respect of the divine, so the Wisdom of God may fometimes feem Foolishness to Men.

XVIII. EUPH. I wou'd not have you make these conclusions, unless in reason you ought to make them: But if they are reasonable, why shou'd you not make them? ALC. Some things may feem reasonable at one time, and not at another: And I take this very apology you make, for Credulity and Superstition, to be one of those things. When I view it in its Principles, it feems naturally to follow from just concessions; but when I confider its consequences, I cannot agree to it. A Man had as good abdicate his Nature, as disclaim the use of Reason. A Doctrine is unaccountable. therefore it must be Divine! EUPH. Credulity and Superstition are qualities fo disagreeable and degrading to Humane Nature, fo furely an effect of weakness, and so frequently a cause of wickedness, that I shou'd be very much surprised to find a just course of reasoning lead to them. I can never think that Reason is a blind guide to folly, or that there is any connexion between Truth and Falshood, no more than I can think a thing's being unaccountable a proof that it is Divine: Though at the fame time I cannot help acknow-

ledging, it follows from your own avow'd principles, that a thing's being unaccountable, or incomprehenfible to our Reason, is no fure argument to conclude it is not Divine; especially when there are collateral proofs of its being fo. A Child is influenced by the many fenfible effects it hath felt, of paternal love and care and superior wisdom, to believe and do feveral things with an implicit faith and obedience: And if we in the same manner from the truth and reasonableness, which we plainly fee in fo many points within our cognizance and the advantages which we experience from the feed of the Gospel sown in good ground, were disposed to an implicit Belief of certain other points, relating to schemes we do not know, or subjects to which our Talents are perhaps disproportionate, I am tempted to think it might become our duty without dishonouring our Reason; which is never fo much dishonoured as when it is foiled, and never in more danger of being foiled, than by judging where it hath neither means nor right to judge. LYS. I would give a good deal, to fee that ingenious Gamester Glaucus have the handling of Euphranor one night at our Club. I own he is a peg too high for me in some of his notions: But then he is admirable at vindicating Humane Reason against the impositions of Priestcraft.

XIX. ALC. He wou'd undertake to make it as clear as day light, that there was nothing worth a straw in Christianity, but what every one knew, or might know, as well without as with it, before as since Fesus Christ. CRI. That great Man, it seems, teacheth, that common sense alone is the Pole-Star by which Mankind ought to steer; and that what is called Revelation must be ridiculous, because it is unnecessary and useless, the natural talents of every Man being sufficient, to make him happy, good, and wise, without any further correspondence

respondence with Heaven either for light or aid. EUPH. I have already acknowledged how fenfible I am, that my fituation in this obscure corner of the Country deprives me of many advantages, to be had from the conversation of ingenious Men in Town. To make my felf fome amends, I am obliged to converse with the dead and my own Thoughts, which last I know are of little weight against the authority of Glaucus, or such like great Men in the Minute Philosophy. But what shall we say to Socrates, for he too was of an opinion very different from that ascribed to Glaucus? ALC. For the present we need not insist on authorities, ancient or modern, or inquire which was the greater Man Socrates or Glaucus. Though. methinks, for fo much as authority can fignify. the present times, gray and hoary with age and experience, have a manifest advantage over those that are falfly called ancient. But not to dwell on authorities, I tell you in plain English, Euphranor, we do not want your Revelations; and that for this plain reason, those that are clear every body knew before, and those that are obscure no body is the better for. EUPH. Whether it was poffible for Mankind to have known all parts of the Christian Religion, besides mysteries and positive. institutions, is not the question between us; and that they actually did not know them, is too plain to be denied. This perhaps, was for want of making a due use of Reason. But, as to the usefulness of Revelation, it seems much the same thing whether they cou'd not know, or wou'd not be at the pains to know, the Doctrines revealed. And as for those Doctrines which were too obscure to penetrate, or too fublime to reach, by natural Reason; how far Mankind may be the better for them is more, I had almost said, than even you or Glaucus can tell.

XX. ALC. But whatever may be pretended as to obscure Doctrines and Dispensations, all this hath nothing to do with Prophecies, which, being altogether relative to Mankind, and the events of this World, to which our faculties are furely well enough proportioned, one might expect shou'd be very clear, and fuch as might inform instead of puzzling us. EUPH. And yet it must be allowed that as some Prophecies are clear, there are others very obscure; but left to my self, I doubt I shou'd never have inferred from thence that they were not Divine, In my own way of thinking I shou'd have been apt to 'conclude, that the Prophecies we understand are a proof for Inspiration; but that those we do not understand are no proof against it. Inasmuch as for the latter our ignorance or the referve of the Holy Spirit may account, but for the other nothing, for ought that I fee, can account but Inspiration. ALC. Now I know feveral fagacious Men, who conclude very differently from you, to wit, that the one fort of Prophecies are nonfense, and the other contrived after the events. Behold the difference between a Man of free thought and one of narrow principles! EUPH. It feems then they reject the Revelations because they are obscure, and Daniel's Prophecies because they are clear. ALC. Either way a Man of fense see cause to suspect there has been foul play. EUPH. Your Men of fense are. it feems, hard to pleafe. ALC. Our Philosophers are Men of piercing eyes. EUPH. I suppose such Men never make transient judgments from tranfient views; but always establish fixed conclusifions upon a thorough inspection of things. For my own part, I dare not engage with a Man, who has examined those points so nicely, as it may be prefumed you have done: But I cou'd name fome eminent writers of our own, now living, whose

Books on the subject of Prophecy have given great satisfaction to Gentlemen, who pass for men of fense and learning, here in the Country. ALC. You must know, Euphranor, I am not at leisure to peruse the learned Writings of Divines, on a fubject which a Man may fee through with half an eye. To me it is sufficient, that the point it felf is odd and out of the road of nature. For the rest, I leave them to dispute and settle among themselves, where to fix the precise time when the Scepter departed from Judab; or whether in Daniel's Prophecy of the Messiab we shou'd compute by the Chaldwan or the Julian year. My only conclusion concerning all such matters is, that I will never trouble my felf about them. EUPH. To an extraordinary genius, who fees things with half an eye, I know not what to fay: But for the rest of Mankind, one wou'd think it shou'd be very rash in them to conclude, without much and exact inquiry, on the unfafe fide of a question which concerns their chief interest. ALC. Mark it well: a true Genius in pursuit of Truth makes swift advances on the wings of General maxims, while little minds creep and grovel amidst mean particularities. I lay it down for a certain Truth; that by the fallacious arts of Logic and Criticism, straining and forcing, palliating, patching and diftinguishing, a Man may justify or make out any thing; and this remark, with one or two about prejudice, faves me a world of trouble. EUPH. You, Alcipbron, who foar sublime on strong and free pinions, vouchfafe to lend a helping hand to those whom you behold entangled in the birdlime of prejudice. For my part, I find it very possible to suppose Prophecy may be Divine, although there shou'd be some obscurity at this distance, with respect to dates of time or kinds of years. You your felf own Revelation possible; and allow278

ing this I can very eafily conceive it may be odd, and out of the road of nature. I can without amazement meet in Holy Scripture divers Prophecies, whereof I do not see the completion, divers texts I do not understand, divers mysteries above my comprehension, and ways of God to me unaccountable. Why may not some Prophecies relate to parts of History I am not well enough acquainted with, or to events not yet come to pass? It feems to me that Prophecies unfathomed by the hearer, or even the speaker himself, have been afterward verified and understood in the event; and it is one of my maxims, That, what bath been may be. Though I rub my Eyes, and do my utmost to extricate my felf from prejudice, yet it still feems very possible to me, that, what I do not, a more acute, more attentive, or more learned Man may understand: At least thus much is plain; the difficulty of some points or passages doth not hinder the clearness of others, and those parts of Scripture, which we cannot interpret, we are not bound to know the fense of. What evil or what inconvenience, if we cannot comprehend what we are not obliged to comprehend, or if we cannot account for those things which it doth not belong to us to account for? Scriptures not underflood, at one time, or by one person, may be understood at another time, or by other persons. May we not perceive, by retrospect on what is past, a certain progress from darker to lighter, in the feries of the Divine Oeconomy towards Man? And may not future events clear up fuch points as at present exercise the faith of Believers? Now I cannot help thinking (fuch is the force either of truth or prejudice) that in all this, there is nothing strained or forced, or which is not reasonable and natural to suppose.

XXI. ALC. Well, Euphranor, I will lend you a helping

a helping hand, fince you defire it, but think fit to alter my method: For you must know, the main points of Christian Belief have been infused fo early, and inculcated fo often, by nurses, pædagogues, and priests, that, be the proofs ever so plain, it is a hard matter to convince a mind, thus tinctured and stained, by arguing against revealed Religion from its internal characters. I shall therefore fet my felf to confider things in another light, and examine your Religion by certain external characters or circumstantials, comparing the system of Revelation with collateral accounts of ancient Heathen writers, and shewing how ill it confifts with them. Know then, that the Christian Revelation supposing the Fewish, it follows, that if the Yezuish be destroyed the Christian must of course fall to the Ground. Now, to make short work, I shall attack this Fewish Revelation in its head. Tell me, are we not obliged, if we believe the Mofaic account of things, to hold the world was created not quite fix thousand years ago? EUPH, I grant we are. ALC. What will you fay now, if other ancient records carry up the History of the World many thousand years beyond this period? What if the Egyptians and Chinese have accounts extending to thirty or forty thousand years? What if the former of these nations have observed twelve hundred eclipses, during the space of forty eight thousand years, before the time of Alexander the Great? What if the Chinese have also many observations antecedent to the Fewish account of the Creation? What if the Chaldeans had been observing the Stars for above four hundred thousand years? And what shall we say if we have Successions of Kings and their Reigns. marked for feveral thousand years before the begining of the world, affigned by Mofes? Shall we reject the accounts and records of all other nati-

T 2

addicted to search after the Philosopher's Stone, and a Medicine to make Men immortal, to Astro-

^{· *} Bianchini Histor, Univers. c. 17.

logy, Fortune-telling, and Presages of all kinds. Their ignorance in Nature and Mathematics is evident, from the great hand the Fefuits make of that kind of knowledge among them. But what shall we think of those extraordinary annals, if the very Chinese themselves give no credit to them for more than three thousand years before Fesus Christ? If they do not pretend to have begun to write history above four thousand years ago? And if the oldest books they have now extant in an intelligible character, are not above two thousand years old? One wou'd think a Man of your Sagacity, fo apt to suspect every thing out of the common road of nature, shou'd not without the clearest proof admit those annals for authentic, which record fuch strange things as the Sun's not fetting for ten days, and Gold raining three days together. Tell me, Alcipbron, can you really believe these things without inquiring by what means the tradition was preferved, through what hands it passed, or what reception it met with, or who first committed it to writing? ALC. To omit the Chinese and their Story, it will serve my purpose as well to build on the authority of Manetho that learned Egyptian Priest, who had such opportunities of fearching into the most ancient accounts of time, and copying into his Dynasties the most venerable and authentic records inscribed on the pillars of Hermes. EUPH. Pray, Alcipbron, where were those chronological pillars to be feen? ALC. In the Seriadical land. EUPH. And where is that country? ALC, I don't know. EUPH. How were those records preserved for so many ages down to the time of this Hermes, who is faid to have been the first inventor of letters? ALC. I do not know. EUPH. Did any other writers, before or fince Manetho, pretend to have feen, or transcribed, or known any thing about these pil-T 3 lars?

THE MINUTE Dial. VI. 282 lars? ALC. Not that I know, EUPH. Or about the place where they are faid to have been. ALC. If they did, it is more than I know. EUPH. Do the Greek Authors that went into Egypt, and confulted the Ægyptian priests, agree with these accounts of Manetho? ALC. Suppose they do not. EUPH. Doth Diodorus, who lived fince Manetho, follow, cite, or so much as mention this same Manetho? ALC. What will you infer from all this? EUPH. If I did not know you and your principles, and how vigilantly you guard against imposture, I shou'd infer that you were a very credulous Man. For what can we call it but credulity to believe most incredible things on most flender authority, fuch as fragments of an obscure writer, difagreeing with all other Historians, fupported by an obscure authority of Hermes's pillars, for which you must take his word, and which contain things fo improbable as Successions of Gods and Demi-gods, for many thousand years, Vulcan alone having reigned nine thousand? There is little in these venerable Dynasties of Manetho, befides names and numbers; and yet in that little we meet with very strange things, that wou'd be thought Romantic in another writer: For instance, the Nile overflowing with honey, the Moon grown bigger, a speaking Lamb, seventy Kings who reigned as many days one after another, a King a day *. If you are known Alciphron, to give credit to these things, I fear you will lose the honour of being thought incredulous. ALC. And yet these ridiculous fragments, as you wou'd represent them, have been thought worth the pains and lucubrations of very learned Men. How can you account for the work that the great Joseph Scaliger and Sir John Marsham make about them? EUPH. I do not pretend to account for it. To fee Scaliger add another Julian period to make room for fuch things as Manetho's Dynafties, and Sir John Marsham take so much learned pains to piece, patch, and mend those obscure fragments, to range them in Synchronisms, and try to adjust them with sacred Chronology, or make them consistent with themselves and other accounts, is to me very strange and unaccountable. Why they, or Eusebius, or yourself, or any other learned Man shou'd imagine those things deserve

any regard I leave you to explain.

XXII. ALC. After all it is not easy to conceive what shou'd move, not only Manetho, but also other Egyptian Priests, long before his time, to fet up fuch great pretences to antiquity, all which however differing from one another, agree in this, that they overthrow the Mosaic History? How can this be accounted for without some real foundation? What point of pleasure or profit, or power, cou'd fet Men on forging Successions of ancient names, and periods of time for ages before the world began? EUPH. Pray, Alcipbron, is there any thing fo strange or fingular in this vain humour of extending the antiquity of nations beyond the Truth? Hath it not been observed in most parts of the world? Doth it not even in our own times fhew itself, especially among those dependent and fubdued people, who have little else to boast of. To pass over others of our Fellow-subjects, who, in proportion as they are below their neighbours in wealth and power, lay claim to a more remote antiquity; are not the pretensions of Irishmen in this way known to be very great? If I may trust my Memory O Flaherty, in his Ogygia, mentions fome transactions in Ireland before the Flood. The same humour, and from the same cause, appears to have prevailed in Sicily, a Country for some Centuries past, subject to the Dominion of Foreigners:

Foreigners: During which time, the Sicilians have published divers fabulous accounts, concerning the original and antiquity of their cities, wherein they vye with each other. It is pretended to be proved by ancient Inscriptions, whose existence or authority feems on a level with that of Hermes's Pillars, that Palermo was founded in the days of the Patriarch Isaac by a colony of Hebrews, Phænicians and Syrians, and that a Grandson of Esau had been Governor of a tower subsisting within these two hundred years in that city *. The antiquity of Messina hath been carried still higher, by some who wou'd have us think it was enlarged by Nimrod +. The like pretentions are made by Catania, and other Towns of that Island, who have found Authors of as good credit as Manetho to support them. Now I shou'd be glad to know why the Ægyptians, a subdued people, may not probably be supposed to have invented fabulous accounts from the same motive, and like others valued themselves on extravagant pretensions to Antiquity, when in all other respects they were so much inferior to their Masters? That people had been fuccessively conquered by Ethiopians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Grecians, before it appears that those wonderful Dynasties of Manetho and the Pillars of Hermes were ever heard of: as they had been by the two first of those Nations before the time of Solon himself, the earliest Greek that is known to have consulted the Priests of Egypt: Whose accounts were so extravagant that even the Greek Historians, though unacquainted with Holy Scripture, were far from giving an intire credit to them. Herodotus making a report upon their authority, faith, Those to whom such things feem credible may make the best of them, for himfelf

Fazelli Hift. Sicul. decad. 1. lib 8.

⁺ Reina Notizie Istoriche di Messina.

may

himself declaring that it was his purpose to write what he heard *. And both he and Diodorus do. on divers occasions, shew the same Diffidence in the narratives of those Ægyptian Priests. And as we observed of the Egyptians, it is no less certain that the Phænicians, Assyrians and Chaldwans were each a conquered and reduced People, before the rest of the world appear to have heard any thing of their pretentions to fo remote Antiquity. CRI. But what occasion is there to be at any pains to account for the humour of fabulous Writers? Is it not sufficient to see that they relate Absurdities; that they are unsupported by any foreign Evidence; that they do not appear to have been in Credit, even among their own Countrymen, and that they are inconfistent one with another? That Men shou'd have the Vanity to impose on the World by false accounts, is nothing strange; it is much more fo, that after what hath been done towards undeceiving the world by fo many learned Critics, there shou'd be Men found capable of being abused by those paltry scraps of Manetho, Berofus, Ctesias, or the like fabulous or Counterfeit Writers. ALC. Give me leave to observe, those learned Critics may prove to be Ecclefiaftics, perhaps some of them Papists. CRI. what do you think of Sir Isaac Newton, was he either Papist or Ecclefiaftic? Perhaps you may not allow him to have been in Sagacity, or Force of mind, equal to the great Men of the Minute Philosophy: But it cannot be denied that he had read and thought much upon the subject, and that the result of his inquiry was a perfect contempt of all those celebrated Rivals to Moses. ALC. It hath been obferved by Ingenious Men, that Sir Isaac Newton, though a Layman, was deeply prejudiced, witness his great regard to the Bible. CRI. And the same

^{*} Herodotus in Euterpe.

may be faid of Mr. Locke, Mr. Boyle, Lord Bacon, and other famous Laymen, who, however knowing in some points, must nevertheless be allowed not to have attained that keen Discernment, which

is the peculiar distinction of your Sect.

XXIII. But perhaps there may be other reafons beside prejudice, to incline a Man to give Moses the preference, on the Truth of whose Hiflory the Government, Manners, and Religion of his Countrymen were founded and framed; of whose History there are manifest traces in the most ancient books and traditions of the Gentiles, particularly of the Brachmans and Perfees; whose hiflory is confirmed by the late Invention of arts and sciences, the gradual Peopling of the world, the very Names of antient nations, and even by the Authority and Arguments of that renowned Philosopher Lucretius, who, on other points, is so much admired and followed by those of your Sect. Not to mention that the continual Decrease of fluids, the Sinking of hills, and the Diminution of Planetary motions afford fo many Natural Proofs, which flew this world had a beginning; as the Civil or Historical proofs abovementioned do plainly point out, this beginning to have been about the time affigned in Holy Scripture. all which I beg leave to add one Observation more. To any one who confiders, that, on digging into the earth, fuch quantities of shells, and, in some places, bones and horns of animals are found. found and intire after having lain there in all probability some thousands of years; it shou'd seem probable, that Gems, Medals, and Implements in metal or stone, might have lasted intire, buried under ground forty or fifty thousand years, if the world had been fo old. How comes it then to pass that no remains are found, no antiquities of those numerous ages preceding the Scripture accounts of time; no fragments of buildings, no publick monuments, no intaglias, cammeos, statues, baffo relievos, medals, inscriptions, utenfils, or artificial works of any kind are ever discover'd, which may bear testimony to the existence of those mighty Empires, those Successions of Monarchs, Heroes, and Demi-gods, for fo many thousand years? Let us look forward and suppose ten or twenty thousand years to come, during which time we will suppose, that plagues, famines, wars, and earthquakes shall have made great havock in the world, is it not highly probable that at the end of fuch a period, Pillars, Vafes, and Statues now in being of Granite, or Porphyry, or Jasper, (Stones of fuch hardness, as we know them to have lasted two thousand years above ground, without any confiderable alteration) wou'd bear record of thefe and past ages? or that some of our current Coins might then be dug up, or old Walls and the foundations of Buildings shew themselves, as well as the shells and stones of the Primæval World are preserved down to our times. To me it feems to follow from these considerations, which common fense and experience make all men judges of, that we may fee good reason to conclude, the World was created about the time recorded in Holy Scrip-And if we admit a thing fo extraordinary as the Creation of this World, it shou'd seem that we admit fomething strange, and odd, and new to Humane Apprehension, beyond any other miracle whatfoever.

XXIV. Alcipbron fate musing and made no anfwer, whereupon Lysicles expressed himself in the following manner. I must own I shou'd rather suppose with Lucretius, that the world was made by chance, and that Men grew out of the Earth, like Pompions, than pin my faith on those wretched fabulous fragments of Oriental History. And 288

thence.

as for the learned Men, who have taken pains to illustrate and piece them together, they appear to me no better than fo many musty Pedants. An ingenious Free-thinker may perhaps now and then make fome use of their Lucubrations, and play one absurdity against another. But you are not therefore to think, he pays any real regard to the authority of fuch apocryphal Writers, or believes one fyllable of the Chinese, Babylonian, or Egyptian Traditions. If we feem to give them a preference before the Bible, it is only because they are not established by Law. This is my plain sense of the matter, and I dare fay it is the general fense of our Sect; who are too rational to be in earnest on fuch trifles, though they fometime give hints of deep Erudition, and put on a grave face to divert themselves with Bigots. ALC. Since Lysicles will have it fo, I am content not to build on accounts of time preceding the Mofaic. I must nevertheless beg leave to observe, there is another point of a different nature, against which there do not lie the fame exceptions, that deferves to be confidered, and may ferve our purpose as well. I prefume it will be allowed that Historians, treating of times within the Mosaic account, ought by impartial Men to be placed on the same foot with Moses, It may therefore be expected, that those, who pretend to vindicate his Writings, shou'd reconcile them with parallel accounts of other Authors, treating of the same times, things, and persons. And, if we are not attached fingly to Moses, but take our notions from other Writers, and the probability of things, we shall see good cause to believe, the Fews were only a crew of leprous Ægyptians, driven from their Country on account of that loathsome Dithemper; and that their Religion, pretended to have been delivered from Heaven at mount Sinai, was in truth learned in Egypt, and brought from

thence. CRI. Not to infift, on what cannot be denied, that an Historian writing of his own times is to be believed, before others who treat of the fame subject several ages after, it seems to me that it is abfurd to expect we shou'd reconcile Moses with profane Historians, till you have first reconciled them one with another. In answer therefore to what you observe, I desire you wou'd consider in the first place, that Manetho, Charemon, and Lysimachus had published inconsistent accounts of the Yews, and their going forth from Egypt *: In the fecond place, that their Language is a plain proof they were not of Agyptian, but either of Phænician, of Syrian, or of Chaldaan, original: and in the third place, that it doth not feem very probable to suppose, their Religion, the Basis or Fundamental principle of which was the Worship of one only Supreme God, and the principal Defign of which was to abolish Idolatry, cou'd be derived from Ægypt, the most Idolatrous of all nations. It must be owned, the separate situation and institutions of the Jews occasioned, their being treated by some Foreigners, with great ignorance and contempt of them and their original. But Strabo, who is allowed to have been a judicious and inquisitive Writer, though he was not acquainted with their true History, makes more honourable mention of them. He relates that Mofes. with many other Worshippers of one Infinite God, not approving the Image worship of the Egyptians and other nations, went out from Ægypt and fettled in Ferusalem, where they built a Temple to one only God without Images +.

XXV. ALC. We who affert the cause of Liberty against Religion, in these later ages of the

world

+ Strab. 1. 16.

^{*} Joseph. contra Apion. 1, 1.

THE MINUTE Dial. VI. world, lie under great disadvantages, from the loss of ancient Books, which cleared up many points to the eyes of those great Men, Celfus, Porphyry, and Julian, which at a greater distance and with less help cannot so easily be made out by us: but, had we those Records, I doubt not we might demolish the whole System at once. CRI. And yet I make fome doubt of this; because those great Men, as you call them, with all those advantages cou'd not do it. ALC. That must needs have been owing to the Dulness and Stupidity of the world in those days when the art of reasoning was not so much known and cultivated as of late: But those Men of true genius faw through the deceit themfelves, and were very clear in their opinin, which convinces me they had good reason on their side. CRI. And yet that great Man Celfus feems to have had very flight and inconstant notions: One while, he talks like a thorough Epicurean; another, he admits Miracles, Prophefies, and a future state of rewards and punishments. What think you, Alcipbron, is it not fomething capricious in fo great a Man, among other advantages which he afcribes to Brutes above Humane Kind, to suppose they are Magicians and Prophets; that they have a nearer commerce and union with the Divinity; that they know more than Men; and that Elephants, in particular, are of all others most religious animals and strict observers of an Oath *. ALC. A great genius will be fometimes whimfical. But what do you fay to the Emperor Fulian. was not he an extraordinary Man? CRI. He feems by his writings to have been lively and fatyrical. Further, I make no difficulty of owning

that he was a generous, temperate, gallant, and facetious Emperor: But at the fame time it must be allow'd, because his own Heathen Panegyrist

Ammianus

^{*} Origen. contra Celsum, 1. 4.

Ammianus Marcellus + allows it, that he was a prating, light, vain, superstitious fort of Man. And therefore his Judgment or Authority can be but of fmall weight with those, who are not prejudiced in his favour. ALC. But of all the great Men who wrote against Revealed Religion, the greatest without question was that truly great Man Porphyry, the loss of whose invaluable work can never be fufficiently lamented. This profound Philosopher went to the bottom and original of things. He most learnedly confuted the Scriptures, shew'd the Absurdity of the Mosaic accounts, undermined and exposed the Prophesies, and ridiculed allegorical Interpretations *. The moderns, it must be owned, have done great things and fhewn themselves able Men; yet I cannot but regret the loss of what was done by a person of such vast abilities, and who lived so much nearer the Fountain-head; though his authority furvives his writings, and must still have its weight with impartial Men, in spight of the enemies of Truth. CRI. Porphyry, I grant was a thorough Infidel. though he appears by no means to have been incredulous. It feems he had a great opinion of Wizards and Necromancers, and believed the Mysteries. Miracles, and Propheties of Theurgifts and Egyptian priefts. He was far from being an enemy to obscure Jargon; and pretended to extraordinary Extasies. In a word this great Man appears to have been as unintelligible as a Schoolman, as superstitious as a Monk, and as fanatical as any Quietift or Quaker; and, to compleat his character as a Minute Philosopher, he was under strong temptations to lay violent hands on himself. We may frame a notion of this Patriarch of Infidelity, by his judicious way of thinking upon other points as well as the Christian Religion. So sagacious was he as

+ Am. Marcellin. 1. 25.

^{*} Luc. Holstenius de vita & scriptis Porphyrii.

XXVI. But pray tell me, Crito, what you think of Josephus? He is allowed to have been a Man of learning

the world.

Blemishes of things, to fansy some shadow of defect in those great Lights which in our own days have enlightened, and still continue to enlighten

^{*} Vide Porphyrium de abstinentia, de sacrificiis, de diis & dæmonibus.

learning and judgment. He was himself an afferter of revealed Religion. And Christians, when his authority ferves their turn, are used to cite him with respect. CRI. All this I acknowledge. ALC. Must it not then seem very strange, and very suspicious to every impartial Inquirer, that this learned Few writing the History of his own Country, of that very place, and those very times, where and when Jesus Christ made his appearance, shou'd yet fay nothing of the character, miracles, and doctrine of that Extraordinary Person? Some ancient Chriflians were so sensible of this, that, to make amends, they inferted a famous Passage in that Historian which imposture hath been sufficiently detected by able Critics in the last age. CRI. Though there are not wanting able Critics on the other fide of the question, yet not to enter upon the discussion of that celebrated passage, I am content to give you all you can defire, and suppose it not genuine, but the pious fraud of some wrong-headed Christian, who cou'd not brook the omission in Fofephus: But this will never make fuch omission a real objection against Christianity. Nor is there, for ought I can fee, any thing in it whereon to ground either admiration or fuspicion; inasmuch as it shou'd feem very natural, supposing the Gofpel account exactly true, for Josephus to have said nothing of it; confidering that the view of that writer was to give his country some figure in the eye of the World, which had been greatly prejudiced against the Jews, and knew little of their history, to which end the Life and Death of our Saviour wou'd not in any wife have conduced; confidering that Fosephus cou'd not have been an eyewitness of our Saviour or his Miracles; considering that he was a Pharifee of Quality and Learning, foreign as well as Jewish, one of great Employment in the State, and that the Gospel was preached

THE MINUTE Dial. VI. 294 preached to the poor; that the first Instruments of spreading it, and the first Converts to it were mean and illiterate, that it might not feem the work of Man, or beholding to Humane interest or power, confidering the general prejudice of the Fews, who expected in the Messiab a temporal and conquering Prince, which prejudice was fo strong, that they chose rather to attribute our Saviour's miracles to the Devil, than acknowledge him to be the Christ: Considering also the hellish Disorder and Confusion of the Fewish State in the Days of Tosephus, when Mens minds were filled and aftonished with unparallel'd wars, diffensions, massacres, and feditions of that devoted people. Laying all these things together, I do not think it strange, that such a man, writing with such a view, at fuch a time, and in fuch circumstances, shou'd omit to describe our Blessed Saviour's life and death. or to mention his miracles, or to take notice of the State of the Christian Church, which was then as a grain of Mustard seed beginning to take Root and germinate. And this will feem still less strange, if it be confidered, that the Apostles in a few years after our Saviour's death departed from Ferusalem. fetting themselves to convert the Gentiles, and were dispersed throughout the world: that the Converts in Ferufalem were, not only of the meanest of the people, but also few; the three thousand, added to the Church in one day upon Peter's preaching in that city, appearing to have been not Inhabitants but Strangers from all parts affembled to celebrate the feast of Pentecost; and that all the time of Josephus and for several years after, during a Succession of fifteen Bishops, the Christians at Jerusalem observed the Mosaic Law *, and were confequently

^{*} Sulp. Sever. Sacr. Hift. 1. 2. & Euseb. Chron, lib. poster.

confequently in outward appearance, one people with the rest of the Jews, which must have made them less observable. I wou'd fain know what reason we have to suppose, that the Gospel, which in its first Propagation feemed to overlook the great or confiderable men of this world, might not also have been over looked by them, as a thing not fuited to their apprehensions and way of thinking? Besides, in those early times might not other learned Tews as well as + Gamaliel, fuspend their judgment of this new way, as not knowing what to make or fay of it, being on one hand unable to quit the Notions and Traditions in which they were brought up, and, on the other, not daring to refift or speak against the Gospel, lest they should be found to fight against God? Surely at all events, it cou'd never be expected, that an uncoverted Yew shou'd give the fame account of the Life, Miracles, and Doctrine of Jefus Christ, as might become a Christian to have given; nor on the other hand was it at all improbable, that a Man of fense shou'd beware to lessen or traduce what, for ought he knew, might have been a heavenly Dispensation, between which two courses the middle was to fay nothing, but pass it over in a doubtful or a respectful silence. And it is observable, that where this Historian occasionally mentions Jesus Christ in his account of St. Fames's death, he doth it without any reflection, or faying either good or bad, though at the fame time he shews a regard for the Apostle. It is observable, I say, that speaking of Jesus his expression is, who was called the Christ, not who pretended to be the Christ, or who was falfely called the Christ, but simply To ALYOMENE Xeise*. It is evident Fosephus knew there was such a Man as Fesus, and that he was said to be the Christ, U 2

⁺ Acts v.

^{*} Jos. Ant. 1. 20. c. 8.

THE MINUTE Dial. VI. 296 and yet he condemns neither him nor his followers: which to me feems an Argument in their favour. Certainly if we suppose Fosephus to have known or been persuaded that he was an Impostor, it will be difficult to account for his not faying fo in plain terms. But if we suppose him in Gamaliel's way of thinking, who suspended his judgment, and was afraid of being found to fight against God, it shou'd feem natural for him to behave in that very manner, which according to you makes against our Faith, but I verily think makes for it. But what if Fosephus had been a Bigot, or even a Sadducee, an Infidel, an Atheist? What then! we readily grant there might have been Persons of Rank, Politicians, Generals, and Men of Letters, then as well as now, Jews as well as Englishmen, who believed no revealed Religion: And that some such persons might possibly have heard of a man in low life who performed Miracles by Magic, without informing themselves, or perhaps ever inquiring, about his Mission and Doctrine. Upon the whole. I cannot comprehend, why any Man shou'd conclude against the Truth of the Gospel, from Fosephus's omitting to speak of it, any more than from his omitting to embrace it. Had the first Christians been Chief Priests and Rulers, or Men of science and learning, like Philo and Fosephus, it might perhaps with better colour have been objected, that their Religion was of Humane Contrivance, than now that it hath pleafed God by weak things to confound the Strong. This I think fufficiently accounts, why in the beginning the Gospel might overlook or be overlooked by Men of a certain rank and character.

XXVII. ALC. And yet it feems an odd argument in proof of any Doctrine, that it was preached by fimple people to fimple people. CRI. Indeed if there was no other attestation to the Truth

of the Christian Religion, this must be owned a very weak one. But if a Doctrine begun by instruments, mean as to all Humane Advantages, and making its first Progress among those, who had neither wealth nor Art nor power to grace or encourage it, shou'd in a short time by its own innate Excellency, the mighty force of Miracles, and the demonstration of the Spirit, not only without, but against, all worldly Motives spread through the world, and subdue Men of all ranks and conditions of life, wou'd it not be very unreasonable to reject or suspect it, for the want of humane means? And might not this with much better reason be thought an Argument of its coming from God? ALC. But still an inquisitive Man will want the Testimony of Men of learning and knowledge. CRI. But from the first Century onwards, there was never wanting the testimony of such Men, who wrote learnedly in defence of the Christian Religion, who lived, many of them, when the memory of things was fresh, who had abilities to judge and means to know, and who gave the clearest proofs of their conviction and fincerity. ALC. But all the while these Men were Christians, prejudiced Christians, and therefore their Testimony is to be CRI. It feems then you wou'd have fuspected. Fews or Heathens attest the Truths of Christanity. ALC. That is the very thing I want. CRI. But how can this be? or if it cou'd, wou'd not any rational Man be apt to suspect such Evidence, and ask, how it was possible for a Man really to believe fuch things himself and not become a Chriflian? the Apostles and first Converts were themfelves Fews, and brought up in a veneration for the Law of Moses, and in all the prejudices of that people: many Fathers, Christian Philosophers, and learned Apologists for the Faith, who had been bred Gentiles, were without doubt imbued with U.3 prejudices

THE MINUTE Dial. VI. 298 prejudices of Education: and if the finger of God and force of Truth converted both the one and the other from Judaism or Gentilism, in spight of their prejudices to Christianity, is not their Testimony fo much the stronger? You have then the fuffrages of both Jews and Gentiles, attesting to the Truth of our Religion in the earliest ages. But to expect or defire the attestation of Fews remaining Tews, or of Gentiles remaining Gentiles, feems unreasonable: nor can it be imagined that the Testimony of Men, who were not converted themselves, shou'd be the likeliest to convert others. We have indeed the Testimony of Heathen Writers to prove, That about the time of our Saviour's birth, there was a general expectation in the east of a Messiah or Prince, who shou'd found a new Dominion: That there were fuch people as Christians: That they were cruelly perfecuted and put to death: That they were innocent and holy in life and worship: And that there did really exist in that time, certain persons and facts mentioned in the New Testament: And for other points, we have learned Fathers, feveral of whom had been, as I already observed, bred Heathens, to attest their Truth. ALC. For my part I have no great opinion of the capacity or learning of the Fathers, and many learned Men, especially of the reformed Churches abroad, are of the same mind, which saves me the trouble of looking my felf into their voluminous Writings. CRI. I shall not take upon me to fay, with the Minute Philosopher Pomponatius *, that Origen, Bafil, Augustin, and divers other Fathers. were equal to Plato, Aristotle, and the greatest

of the Gentiles in Humane Knowledge. But, if I may be allowed to make a judgment from what I have seen of their writings, I shou'd think several of them Men of great parts, eloquence, and learn-

ing,

* Lib. de immortalitate animæ.

ing, and much superior to these who seem to undervalue them. Without any arront to certain modern Critics or Translators, Erasinus may be allowed a man of sine taste, and a sit judge of sense and good writing, though his judgment in this point was very different from theirs. Some of our reformed Brethren, because the Romanists attribute too much, seem to have attributed too little to them, from a very usual, though no very judicious opposition; which is apt to lead men to remark defects, without making proper allowances, and to say things which neither piety, candour, nor good

fense require them to say.

XXVIII. ALC, But though I shou'd acknowledge, that a concurring Testimony of many learned and able Men throughout the first ages of Christianity may have its weight, yet when I consider the great number of Forgeries and Herefies that forung up in those times, it very much weakens their credit. CRI. Pray, Alcipbron, wou'd it be allowed a good Argument in the mouth of a Papift against the Reformation, that many absurd Sects fprung up at the same time with it? Are we to wonder, that when good feed is fowing, the enemy shou'd fow tares? But at once to cut off feveral Objections, let us suppose in fact, what you do not deny possible, that there is a God, a Devil, and a Revelation from Heaven committed to writing many Centuries ago. Do but take a view of Humane Nature, and confider, what wou'd probably follow upon fuch a supposition; and whether it is not very likely there shou'd be Halfbelievers, mistaken Bigots, holy Frauds, ambitious, interested, disputing, conceited, schismatical, hæretical, abfurd Men among the Profesfors of such revealed Religion, as well as after a course of ages, various readings, omissions, transpositions, and obscurities in the text of the sacred Oracles? And

if fo, I leave you to judge, whether it be reasonable to make those events an Objection against the being of a thing, which wou'd probably and naturally follow upon the Supposal of its Being. ALC. After all, fay what you will, this variety of Opinions must needs shake the faith of a reasonable Man. Where there are fo many different Opinions on the same point, it is very certain they cannot all be true, but it is certain they may all be false. And the means to find out the Truth! when a Man of fense sets about this Inquiry, he finds himself on a sudden startled and amused with hard words and knotty questions. This makes him abandon the pursuit, thinking the game not worth the chase. CRI. But wou'd not this Man of sense do well to confider, it must argue want of discernment, to reject divine Truths for the fake of Humane Follies? Use but the same candour and impartiality in treating of Religion, that you wou'd think proper on other subjects. We desire no more, and expect no less. In Law, in Physic, in Politics, wherever men have refined, is it not evident they have been always apt to run into difputes and chicane? But will that hinder you from admitting, there are many good rules and just notions, and useful truths in all those professions. Physicians may dispute, perhaps vainly and unintelligibly, about the Animal System: they may affign different causes of Distempers, some explaining them by the elementary qualities, hot and cold, moist and dry, yet this doth not hinder, but the Bark may be good for an Ague, and Rhubarb for a Flux. Nor can it others by chymical, others by mechanical principles, be inferred from the different fects, which from time to time have fprung up in that profession, the Dogmatic, for instance, Empiric, Methodic, Galenic, Paracelfian, or the hard words and knotty questions and idle theories which

which have grown from them, or been engrafted on them, that, therefore, we shou'd deny the Circulation of the Blood, or reject their excellent rules about Exercise, Air, and Diet. ALC. It feems you wou'd fcreen Religion by the example of other professions, all which have produced Sects and Disputes as well as Christianity, which may in it felf be true and ufeful, notwithstanding many false and fruitless Notions engrafted on it by the wit of Man. Certainly if this had been observed or believed by many acute Reasoners, they wou'd never have made the multiplicity of Religious Opinions and Controversies an Argument against Religion in general. CRI. How fuch an obvious Truth shou'd escape Men of sense and inquiry I leave you to account: But I can very eafily account for the gross mistakes in those, who pass for Free-thinkers without ever thinking; or, if they do think, whose meditations are employ'd on other points of a very different nature, from a ferious and impartial Inquiry about Religion.

XXIX. But to return: what or where is the profession of Men, who never split into schisms, or never talk nonfense? Is it not evident, that out of all the kinds of knowledge, on which the Humane mind is employ'd, there grow certain excrescences, which may be pared off, like the clippings of hair or nails in the body, and with no worse consequence. Whatever Bigots or Enthufiasts, whatever notional or scholastic Divines may fay or think, it is certain the Faith derived from Christ and his Apostles, was not a piece of empty Sophistry; they did not deliver and transmit down to us κευήν ἀπάτην but γυμινήν γνώμην, to use the expression of a holy Confessor *. And, to pretend to demolish their foundation for the fake of Humane Superstructure, be it hay or stubble or what

THE MINUTE Dial. VI. it will, is no Argument of just thought or reason; any more than it is of fairness, to suppose a doubtful fenfe fixed, and argue from one fide of the queftion in disputed points. Whether, for instance, the beginning of Genefis is to be understood in a literal or allegorical fense? Whether the Book of Tob be an Hiftory or a Parable? Being points difputed between Christians, an Infidel can have no right to argue from one fide of the Question, in those or the like cases. This or that Tenet of a Sect. this or that controverted Notion is not what we contend for at prefent, but the general Faith taught by Christ and his Apostles, and preserved by universal and perpetual Tradition in all th Churches down to our own times. To tax or strike at this Divine Doctrine, on account of things foreign and adventitious, the speculations and difputes of curious Men, is in my mind an abfurdity of the fame kind, as it wou'd be to cut down a fine tree yielding Fruit and Shade, because its leaves afforded nourishment for Caterpillars, or because Spiders may now and then weave cobwebs among the branches. ALC. To divide and diffinguish wou'd take time. We have several Gentlemen very capable of judging in the gross, but that want attention for irksome and dry Studies or minute Inquiries. To which as it would be very hard to oblige Men against their will, so it must be a great wrong to the world, as well as themselves to debar them from the Right of deciding according to their natural fense of things. CRI. It were to be wished those capable Men would employ their Judgment and attention on the fame objects. If the theological Inquiries are unpalatable, the field of nature is wide. How many Discoveries to be made! how many Errors to be corrected in arts and sciences! how many Vices to be reformed in life and manners! Why do men

fingle

fingle out fuch points as are innocent and ufeful. when there are so many pernicious mistakes to be amended? Why fet themselves to destroy the hopes of Humane Kind and encouragements to Virtue? Why delight to judge where they disdain to inquire? Why not employ their noble Talents on the Longitude or perpetual Motion? ALC. I wonder you shou'd not see the difference between points of Curiofity and Religion. Those employ only Men of a genius or humour fuited to them; but all Mankind have a right to censure, and are concerned to judge of these, except they will blindly fubmit to be governed by the stale wisdom of their Ancestors and the established Laws of their Coun-CRI. It shou'd feem, if they are concerned, to judge, they are not less concerned to examine before they judge. ALC. But after all the examination and inquiry that mortal Man can make about Revealed Religion, it is impossible to come at any rational fure footing.

XXX. There is, indeed, a deal of specious talk about Faith founded upon Miracles; but when I examine this matter thoroughly, and trace Chriftian Faith up to its original, I find it rests upon much darkness and scruple and uncertainty. Inflead of points evident or agreeable to Humane Reason, I find a wonderful narrative of the Son of God tempted in the wilderness by the Devil, a thing utterly unaccountable, without any end, or use or reason whatsoever. I meet with strange Histories of Apparitions of Angels and Voices from Heaven, with furprifing accounts of Dæmoniacs, things quite out of the road of common Sense or Observation, with feveral incredible feats faid to have been done by Divine Power, but more probably the Inventions of Men; nor the less likely to be so because I cannot pretend to fay with what view they were invented. Defigns deeply laid are dark, and the

THE MINUTE Dial. VI. 304 less we know the more we suspect: But admitting them for true, I shall not allow them to be miraculous, until I thoroughly know the power of what are called fecond causes and the force of Magic. CRI. You feem, Alcipbron, to analyse, not Faith but infidelity, and trace it to its Principles; which from your own account, I collect to be dark and doubtful scruples and surmises, hastiness in judging, and narrowness in thinking, grounded on a fanciful notion which over-rates the little scantling of your own experience, and on real ignorance of the views of Providence, and of the qualities, operations, and mutual respects of the several kinds of beings, which are, or may be, for ought you know, in the Universe. Thus obscure. uncertain, conceited, and conjectural are the Principles of Infidelity. Whereas on the other hand, the Principles of Faith feem to be points plain and clear. It is a clear point, that this Faith in Christ was spread abroad throughout the world foon after his death. It is a clear point, that this was not effected by humane Learning, Politics, or Power. It is a clear point, that in the early times of the Church there were feveral men of Knowledge and Integrity, who embraced this Faith not from any, but against all, temporal motives. It is a clear point, that the nearer they were to the fountain-head, the more opportunity they had to fatisfy themselves, as to the Truth of these facts, which they believed. It is a clear point that the less interest there was to persuade, the more need there was of Evidence to convince them. It is a clear point that they relied on the Authority of those who declared themselves eye-witnesses of the Miracles and Refurrection of Christ. It is a clear point, that those professed Eye-witnesses suffered much for this their Attestation, and finally sealed it with their Blood. It is a clear point, that thefe Witnesses.

that

Witnesses, weak and contemptible as they were. overcame the world, spread more light, preached purer morals, and did more benefit to Mankind, than all the Philosophers and Sages put together. These points appear to me clear and fure, and, being allow'd fuch, they are plain, just, and reafonable motives of affent; they stand upon no fallacious ground, they contain nothing beyond our fphere, neither supposing more knowledge nor other faculties than we are really masters of; and if they shou'd not be admitted for morally certain. as I believe they will by fair and unprejudiced Inquirers, yet the allowing them to be only probable is sufficient to stop the mouth of an Infidel. These plain points. I fay are the Pillars of our Faith, and not those obscure ones by you supposed, which are in truth the unfound, uncertain Principles of Infidelity, to a rash, prejudiced, and assuming Spirit. To raise an Argument, or answer an objection, from hidden powers of Nature or Magic is groping in the dark; but by the evident light of fense men might be sufficiently certified of sensible Effects, and matters of Fact, such as the Miracles and Refurrection of Christ: and the Testimony of fuch Men may be transmitted to After-ages, with the fame moral certainty as other Historical Narrations: and those same miraculous Facts, compared by Reason with the Doctrines they were brought to prove do afford to an unbiaffed mind strong Indications of their coming from God, or a superior principle, whose Goodness retrieved the Moral World, whose Power commanded the Natural, and whose Providence extended over both. Give me leave to fay, that nothing dark, nothing incomprehenfible, or mysterious, or unaccountable, is the ground or motive the principle or foundation, the proof or reason of our faith, although it may be the object of it. For it must be owned,

that, if by clear and fure principles we are rationally led to believe a point lefs clear, we do not therefore reject fuch point, because it is mysterious to conceive, or difficult to account for, nor wou'd it be right fo to do. As for Jews and Gentiles, anciently attributing our Saviour's Miracles to Magic, this is fo far from being a Proof against them, that to me it feems rather a Proof of the Facts, without disproving the Cause to which we ascribe them. As we do not pretend to know the Nature and Operations of Dæmons, the History, Laws, and System of rational Beings, and the Schemes or Views of Providence, fo far as to account for every action and appearance recorded in the Gofpel; fo neither do you know enough of those things, to be able from that Knowledge of yours to object against accounts so well attested. It is an easy matter to raise Scruples upon many authentic parts of Civil History, which, requiring a more perfect knowledge of Facts, Circumstances, and Councils, than we can come at to explain them, must be to us inexplicable. And this is still more easy with respect to the History of Nature, in which, if Surmifes were admitted for proofs against things odd, strange, and unaccountable, if our scanty Experience were made the rule and measure of Truth, and all these Phænomena rejected, that we, through ignorance of the Principles, and Laws, and System of Nature, cou'd not explain, we shou'd indeed make Discoveries, but it wou'd be only of our own Blindness and Presumption. And why men that are fo easily and so often gravell'd in common Points, in things natural and visible, shou'd yet be fo sharp-fighted and dogmatical about the invisible World, and its Mysteries, is to me a point utterly unaccountable by all the Rules of Logic and good Sense. Upon the whole, therefore, I cannot help thinking there are Points sufficiently plain, and clear, and full, whereon a Man may ground a reasonable Faith in Christ: but that the attacks of Minute Philosophers against this faith are grounded upon Darkness, Ignorance and Presumption. ALC. I doubt I shall still remain in the dark as to the Proofs of the Christian Religion, and always pre-

fume there is nothing in them.

XXXI. For how is it possible, at this remote distance, to arrive at any Knowledge, or frame any Demonstration about it? CRI. What then? Knowledge, I grant, in a strict sense cannot be had without Evidence or Demonstration; but probable Arguments are a fufficient ground of Faith. Who ever supposed that scientifical Proofs were necessary to make a Christian? Faith alone is required; and provided that, in the main and upon the whole, Men are perfuaded, this faving Faith may confift. with some degrees of Obscurity, Scruple, and Er-For although the Light of Truth be unchangeable, and the fame in its eternal Source, the Father of Lights: Yet with respect to us, it is variously weakened and obscured, by passing through a long Distance or gross Medium, where it is intercepted, distorted, or tinctured by the Prejudiced Passions of Men. But all this notwithstanding, he that will use his Eyes may see enough for the purposes either of Nature, or of Grace; though by a light, dimmer indeed, or clearer, according to the Place or the Distance, or the Hour, or the Medium. And it will be fufficient. if fuch Analogy appears between the Dispensations of Grace and Nature, as may make it probable (although much shou'd be unaccountable in both) to suppose them derived from the same Author, and the workmanship of one and the same Hand. ALC. Those who saw and touched and handled Fesus Christ after his Resurrection, if there were any such, may be faid to have feen by a clear Light: But to

fations.

[.] V. Spinosa Epist. ad Oldenburgium.

Dial. VI. PHILOSOPHER.

300

Our

fations, and, by a retrospect on a long Series of past Ages, perceive a Unity of Design running throughout the whole, a gradual disclosing and fulfilling the purposes of Providence, a regular Progress from Types to Antitypes, from things Carnal to things Spiritual, from Earth to Heaven-We may behold Christ crucified, that stumblingblock of the Tews, and foolishness to the Greeks, putting a final Period to the Temple Worship of the one, and the Idolatry of the other, and that Stone, which was cut out of the Mountain without Hands, and brake in Pieces all other King-

doms, become it felf a great Mountain.

XXXII. If a due Reflection on these things be not fufficient to beget a Reverence for the Christian Faith in the Minds of Men, I shou'd rather impute it to any other Cause, than a wife and cautious Incredulity: When I see their easiness of Faith in the common concerns of Life, where there is no Prejudice or Appetite to bias or disturb their natural Judgment: When I fee those very Men that in Religion will not stir a step without Evidence, and at every turn expect Demonstration, trust their Health to a Physician, and their Lives to a Sailor with an implicit faith, I cannot think they deferve the honour of being thought more incredulous than other Men, or that they are more accustom'd to know, and for this reason less inclined to believe. On the contrary, one is tempted to fuspect, that Ignorance hath a greater share than Science in our modern Infidelity, and that it proceeds more from a wrong Head, or an irregular Will than from deep Researches. LYS. We do not, it must be owned, think that Learning of deep Researches are necessary to pass right Judgments upon things. I fometimes fufped that Learning is apt to produce and justify Whims, and fincerely believe we shou'd do better without it. X

THE MINUTE Dial. VI. 310 Our Sect are divided on this Point, but much the greater part think with me. I have heard more than once very observing Men remark, that Learning was the true humane Means which preserved Religion in the World, and that, if we had it in our power to prefer Blockheads in the Church, all wou'd foon be right. CRI. Men must be strangely in love with their Opinions, to put out their Eyes rather than part with them. But it has been often remarked, by observing Men that there are no greater Bigots than Infidels. LYS. What, a Free-thinker and a Bigot, impossible! CRI. Not fo impossible neither, that an Infidel shou'd be bigoted to his Infidelity. Methinks I see a Bigot, wherever I fee a Man over-bearing and positive without knowing why, laying the greatest stress on Points of smallest moment, hasty to judge of the Conscience, Thoughts, and inward Views of other Men, impatient of reasoning against his own Opinions, and choosing them with Inclination rather than Judgment, an Enemy to Learning, and attached to mean Authorities. How far our Modern Infidels agree with this Description, I leave to be confidered by those who really confider and think for themselves. LYS. We are no Bigots. we are Men that discover Difficulties in Religion. that tie Knots and raise Scruples, which disturb the Repose and interrupt the golden Dreams of Bigots, who therefore cannot endure us. CRI. They who cast about for Difficulties, will be fure to find or make them upon every subject: But he that wou'd, upon the foot of Reason, erect himself into a Judge, in order to make a wife Judgment on a Subject of that nature, will not only confider the doubtful and difficult Parts of it, but take a comprehensive View of the whole, consider it in all its Parts and Relations, trace it to its Original, examine its Principles, Effects, and Tendencies,

its Proofs internal and external; he will diffinguish between the clear Points and the obscure, the certain and the uncertain, the effential and circumstantial, between what is genuine and what foreign: he will consider the different forts of Proof, that belong to different things, where Evidence is to be expected, where Probability may fuffice, and where it is reasonable to suppose there shou'd be Doubts and Scruples: He will proportion his Pains and Exactness to the Importance of the Inquiry, and check that Disposition of his Mind to conclude all those Notions, groundless Prejudices, with which it was imbued before it knew the Reason of He will filence his Passions, and listen to Truth: He will endeavour to untie Knots as well as to tie them, and dwell rather on the light parts of things than the obscure: He will balance the force of his Understanding with the difficulty of the Subject, and to render his Judgment impartial, hear Evidence on all sides, and, so far as he is led by Authority, choose to follow that of the honestest and wifest Men. Now it is my fincere Opinion. the Christian Religion may well stand the Test of fuch an Inquiry. LYS. But fuch an Inquiry wou'd cost too much Pains and Time. We have thought of another Method, the bringing Religion to the Test of Wit and Humour: This we find a much shorter, easier, and more effectual Way. And as all Enemies are at liberty to choose their Weapons, we make choice of those we are most expert at: And we are the better pleased with this Choice, having observed that of all things a folid Divine hates a Jest. To consider the whole of the Subject, to read and think on all fides, to object plainly, and answer directly, upon the foot of dry Reason and Argument, wou'd be a very tedious and troublesome Affair. Besides it is attacking Pedants at their own Weapons. How much more X 2 delicate

THE MINUTE 312 Dial. VI delicate and artful is it, to give a hint, to cover one's felf with an Ænigma, to drop a double Entendre, to keep it in one's Power to recover, and flip. aside, and leave his Antagonist beating the Air? This hath been practifed with great Success, and I believe it the top Method to gain Profelytes, and confound Pedants. CRI. I have feen feveral things written in this way, which, I suppose, were copied from the Behaviour of a fly fort of Scorners one may fometimes meet with. Suppose a conceited Man that wou'd pass for witty, tipping the Wink upon one, thrusting out his Tongue at another; one while waggishly smiling, another with a grave Mouth and ludicrous Eyes; often affecting the Countenance of one who smother'd a Jest, and fometimes burfting out in a Horse-laugh: What a Figure wou'd this be, I will not fay in the Senate or Council, but in a private Vifit among wellbred Men? And yet this is the Figure that certain great Authors, who in this Age wou'd pass for Models, and do pass for Models, make in their polite and elaborate Writings on the most weighty Points. ALC. I who profess my self an Admirer, an Adorer of Reason, am obliged to own, that in some Cases the Sharpness of Ridicule can do more than the Strength of Argument, But if we exert our felves in the use of Mirth and Humour, it is not for want of other Weapons. shall never be faid that a Free-thinker was afraid of Reasoning. No, Crito, we have Reasons in store, the best are yet to come; and if we can find an Hour for another Conference before we fet out to morrow morning, I'll undertake you shall be plied with Reasons, as clear, and home, and close to the Point as you cou'd wish.

CACTOCTAL CONTRACTOR OF THE CO

The SEVENTH DIALOGUE.

I. Christian Faith impossible. II. Words stand for Ideas. III. No Knowledge or Faith without Ideas. IV. Grace, no Idea of it. V. Abstract Ideas what and bow made. VI. Abstract general Ideas impossible. VII. In what Sense there may be general Ideas. VIII. Suggesting Ideas not the only use of Words. IX. Force as difficult to form an Idea of as Grace. X. Notwithstanding which useful Propositions may be formed concerning it. XI. Belief of the Trinity and other Mysteries not absurd. XII. Mistakes about Faith an occasion of profane Raillery. XIII. Faith its true Nature and Effects. XIV. Illustrated by Science. XV. By Arithmetic in particular. XVI. Sciences conversant about Signs. XVII. The true End of Speech, Reason, Science and Faith. XVIII. Metaphysical Objections as strong against Human Sciences as Articles of Faith. XIX. No Religion, because no Human Liberty. XX. Farther Proof against Human Liberty. XXI. Fatalism a Consequence of erroneous Suppositions. XXII. Man an accountable Agent. XXIII. Inconfiftency, Singularity, and Credulity of Minute Philosophers. XXIV. Untrodden Paths and new Light of the Minute Philosophers. XXV. Sophistry of the Minute Philosophers. XXVI. Minute Philosophers ambiguous, ænigmatical, unfathomable. XXVII. Scepticism of the Minute Philosophers. XXVIII. How a Sceptic ought to behave. XXIX. Minute Philosophers why difficult to convince. XXX. Thinking not the epidemical Evil of thefe times. XXXI. Infidelity not an Effect of Reason or Thought, its true Motives affigned. XXXII. Variety X_3

Variety of Opinions about Religion, Effects thereof. XXXIII. Method for proceeding with Minute Philosophers. XXXIV. Want of Thought
and want of Education Defects of the present
Age.

I. THE Philosophers having resolved to set out for London next Morning, we affembled at break of day in the Library. Alcipbron began with a Declaration of his Sincerity, affuring us he had very maturely and with a most unbiassed Mind confidered all that had been faid the day before. He added that upon the whole he cou'd not deny feveral probable Reasons were produced for embracing the Christian Faith. But, said he, those Reasons being only probable can never prevail against absolute Certainty and Demonstration. If therefore I can demonstrate your Religion to be a thing altogether abfurd and inconfistent, your probable Arguments in its defence do from that Moment lose their Force, and with it all Right to be answer'd or considered. The concurring Testimony of fincere and able Witnesses hath without question great weight in humane Affairs. I will even grant that things odd and unaccountable to Humane Judgment or Experience, may fometimes claim our Assent on that fole Motive. And I will also grant it possible, for a Tradition to be convev'd with moral Evidence through many Centuries. But at the same time you will grant to me, that a thing demonstrably and palpably false is not to be admitted on any Testimony whatever, which t best can never amount to Demonstration. To be plain, no Testimony can make Nonsense Sense; no moral Evidence can make Contradictions confiftent. Know then, that as the Strength of our Cause doth not depend upon, so neither is it to be decided by any critical Points of History, Chronology, Dial. VII. PHILOSOPHER. nology, or Languages. You are not to wonder, if the same fort of Tradition and moral Proof, which governs our Affent with respect to Facts in civil or natural History, is not admitted as a sufficient Voucher for metaphyfical Absurdities and absolute Impossibilities. Things obscure and unaccountable in humane Affairs, or the Operations of Nature, may yet be possible, and, if well attested, may be affented unto: But religious Affent or Faith can be evidently shewn in its own nature to be impracticable, impossible, and absurd. the primary Motive to Infidelity. This is our Citadel and Fortress, which may, indeed, be graced with outworks of various Erudition, but, if those are demolished, remains in it self and of its own proper Strength impregnable. EUPH. This. it must be owned, reduceth our Inquiry within a narrow Compass: Do but make out this, and I shall have nothing more to fay. ALC. Know then, that the shallow Mind of the Vulgar, as it dwells only on the outward Surface of things, and considers them in the gross, may be easily imposed on. Hence a blind Reverence for Religious Faith and Mystery. But when an acute Philosopher comes to diffect and analyse these Points, the Imposture plainly appears: And as he has no Blindness, so he has no Reverence for empty Notions, or, to speak more properly, for meer Forms of Speech, which mean nothing, and are of no use to Mankind.

II. Words are Signs: They do or shou'd stand for Ideas; which so far as they suggest they are significant. But words that suggest no Ideas are insignificant. He who annexeth a clear Idea to every Word he makes use of speaks Sense; but where such Ideas are wanting, the Speaker utters Non-sense. In order therefore to know whether any Man's Speech be senseless and insignificant, we

X 4

THE MINUTE Dial. VII. have nothing to do but lay afide the Words and confider the Ideas fuggested by them. Men, not being able immediately to communicate their Ideas one to another, are obliged to make use of sensible Signs or Words; the use of which is to raise those Ideas in the Hearer, which are in the Mind of the Speaker: And if they fail of this End they ferve to no Purpose. He who really thinks hath a train of Ideas succeeding each other and connected in his Mind: And when he expresseth himself by Discourse, each Word suggests a distinct Idea to the Hearer or Reader; who by that means hath the same train of Ideas in his, which was in the Mind of the Speaker or Writer. As far as this Effect is produced, so far the Discourse is intelligible, hath fense and meaning. Hence it follows, that whoever can be supposed to understand what he reads or hears must have a train of Ideas raised in his Mind, correspondent to the train of Words read or heard. These plain Truths, to which Men readily affent in Theory, are but little attended to in Practice, and therefore deserve to be enlarged on and inculcated however obvious and undeniable. Mankind are generally averfe from thinking though apt enough to entertain Discourse either in themfelves or others: the Effect whereof is, that their Minds are rather stored with Names than Ideas. the husk of Science rather than the thing. And yet these Words without meaning do often make Distinctions of Parties, the Subject matter of their Disputes, and the Object of their Zeal. This is the most general Cause of Error, which doth not influence ordinary Minds alone, but even those who pass for acute and learned Philosophers are often employ'd about Names instead of Things or Ideas, and are supposed to know when they only pronounce hard Words without a meaning.

III. Though it is evident that as Knowledge is

the Perception of the Connexion or Disagreement between Ideas, he who doth not diffinctly perceive the Ideas marked by the terms, fo as to form a mental Proposition answering to the verbal, cannot possibly have Knowledge: No more can he be faid to have Opinion or Faith which imply a weaker Assent, but still it must be to a Proposition. the Terms of which are understood as clearly, although the Agreement or Disagreement of the Ideas may not be so evident, as in the case of Knowledge. I fay, all degrees of Affent whether found. ed on Reason or Authority, more or less cogent, are internal Acts of the Mind which alike terminate in Ideas as their proper Object: Without which there can be really no fuch thing as Knowledge, Faith, or Opinion. We may perhaps raise a Dust and Dispute about Tenets purely verbal; but what is this at bottom more than meer trifling? All which will be eafily admitted with respect to Humane Learning and Science; wherein it is an allowed Method to expose any Doctrine or Tenet by stripping them of the Words, and examining what Ideas are underneath, or whether any Ideas at all? This is often found the shortest way to end Disputes, which might otherwise grow and multiply without end, the Litigants neither understanding one another nor themselves. It were needless to illustrate what shines by its own Light, and is admitted by all thinking Men. My endeavour shall be only to apply it in the present Case. I suppose I need not be at any pains to prove, that the fame Rules of Reason and good Sense which obtain in all other Subjects ought to take place in Religion. As for those who consider Faith and Reason as two distinct Provinces, and wou'd have us think good Sense has nothing to do where it is most concerned, I am resolved never to argue with fuch Men, but leave them in quiet Possession of their their Prejudices. And now, for the particular Application of what I have faid, I shall not single out any nice disputed Points of School Divinity, or those that relate to the Nature and Essence of God, which being allow'd infinite you might pretend to screen them, under the general Notion of Diffi-

culties attending the Nature of Infinity.

IV. Grace is the main Point in the Christian Dispensation, nothing is oftener mentioned or more confidered throughout the New Testament; wherein it is represented as somewhat of a very particular kind, diffinct from any thing revealed to the Tews, or known by the light of Nature. This same Grace is spoken of as the Gift of God, as coming by Fesus Christ, as reigning, as abounding, as operating. Men are faid to fpeak through Grace, to believe through Grace. Mention is made of the Glory of Grace, the Riches of Grace, the Stewards of Grace. Christians are said to be Heirs of Grace, to receive Grace, grow in Grace, be strong in Grace, to stand in Grace, and to fall from Grace. And lastly, Grace is faid to justify and to fave them. Hence Christianity is styled the Covenant or Dispensation of Grace. And it is well known that no Point hath created more Controversy in the Church than this Doctrine of Grace. What Difputes about its Nature, Extent, and Effects, about universal, efficacious, sufficient, preventing, irrefistible Grace have employ'd the Pens of Protestant as well as Popish Divines, of Jansenists and Molinists, of Lutherans, Calvinists, and Arminians, as I have not the least curiosity to know, so I need not fay. It sufficeth to observe, that there have been and are still subsisting great contests upon these Points. Only one thing I shou'd desire to be informed of, to wit, what is the clear and diftinct Idea marked by the Word Grace? I presume a Man may know the bare meaning of a Term, without Dial. VII. PHILOSOPHER. without going into the depth of all those learned Inquiries. This furely is an easy Matter, provided there is an Idea annexed to fuch Term. And if there is not, it can be neither the subject of a rational Dispute, nor the Object of real Faith. Men may indeed impose upon themselves or others. and pretend to argue and believe, when at bottom there is no Argument or Belief, farther than meer verbal trifling. Grace taken in the vulgar Sense, either for Beauty, or Favour, I can easily understand. But when it denotes an active, vital, ruling Principle, influencing and operating on the Mind of Man, distinct from every natural Power or Motive, I profess my self altogether unable to understand it, or frame any distinct Idea of it; and therefore I cannot affent to any Proposition concerning it, nor consequently have any Faith about it: And it is a felf evident Truth, that God obligeth no Man to Impossibilities. At the request of a Philofophical Friend, I did cast an Eye on the Writings he shew'd me of some Divines, and talked with others on this Subject, but after all I had read or heard cou'd make nothing of it, having always found whenever I laid aside the Word Grace, and looked into my own Mind, a perfect vacuity or privation of all Ideas. And, as I am apt to think Mens Minds and Faculties are made much alike, I suspect that other Men, if they examined what they call Grace with the same exactness and indifference, wou'd agree with me that there was nothing in it but an empty Name. This is not the only Instance, where a Word often heard and pronounced is believed intelligible, for no other reafon but because it is familiar. Of the same kind are many other Points reputed necessary Articles of Faith. That which in the present case imposeth upon Mankind I take to be partly this. Men speak of this holy Principle as of something that acts.

acts, moves, and determines, taking their Ideas from corporeal things, from Motion and the Force or Momentum of Bodies, which being of an obvious and fensible Nature they substitute in place of a thing spiritual and incomprehensible, which is a manifest Delusion. For though the Idea of corporeal Force be never fo clear and intelligible, it will not therefore follow that the Idea of Grace, a thing perfectly incorporeal, must be so too. And though we may reason distinctly, perceive, assent, and form Opinions about the one, it will by no means follow that we can do fo of the other. Thus it comes to pass, that a clear sensible Idea of what is real produceth, or rather is made a pretence for, an imaginary spiritual Faith that terminates in no Object; a thing impossible! For there can be no Assent where there are no Ideas: And where there is no Affent there can be no Faith: And what cannot be, that no Man is obliged to,

This is as clear as any thing in Euclid.

V. The fame Method of Reasoning may be applied by any Man of Sense, to confute all other the most essential Articles of the Christian Faith. You are not therefore to wonder that a Man who proceeds on fuch folid Grounds, fuch clear and evident Principles, shou'd be deaf to all you can fay from moral Evidence, or probable Arguments, which are nothing in the balance against Demonstration. EUPH. The more Light and Force there is in this Discourse, the more you are to blame for not having produced it fooner. For my part, I shou'd never have said one Word against Evidence. But let me see whether I understand you rightly. You fay, every Word in an intelligible Discourse must stand for an Idea; which Ideas as far as they are clearly and diffinctly apprehended, fo far the Discourse hath meaning, without which it is useless, and infignificant. ALC. I do. EUPH. For instance instance, when I hear the Words Man, Triangle, Colour, pronounced; they must excite in my Mind distinct Ideas of those things whereof they are Signs, otherwise I cannot be faid to understand them. ALC. Right. EUPH. And this is the only true use of Language. ALC. That is what I affirm. EUPH. But every time the Word Man occurs in Reading or Conversation, I am not conscious that the particular distinct Idea of a Man is excited in my mind. For inftance, when I read in St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians these Words: If a Man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, be deceiveth himself. Methinks I comprehend the Force and Meaning of this Proposition, although I do not frame to my felf the particular distinct Idea of a Man. ALC. It is very true. you do not form in your Mind the particular Idea of Peter, James, or John, of a fair or a black, a tall or a low, a fat or a lean, a straight or a crooked. a wife or a foolish, a sleeping or waking Man, but the abstract general Idea of Man, prescinding from, and exclusive of all particular Shape, Size, Complexion, Passions, Faculties, and every individual Circumstance. To explain this Matter more fully. you are to understand there is in the Humane Mind, a Faculty of contemplating the general Nature of things, separate from all those Particularities which distinguish the Individuals one from a-For Example, in Peter, James, and John, you may observe in each a certain Collection of Stature, Figure, Colour, and other peculiar Properties by which they are known afunder, diftinguished from all other Men, and, if I may so fay, individuated. Now leaving out of the Idea of a Man, that which is peculiar to the Individual, and retaining only that which is common to all Men, you form an abstract universal Idea of Man or Human Nature, which includes no particular Stature.

Stature, Shape, Colour, or other quality whether of Mind or Body. After the fame manner you may observe particular Triangles to differ one from another, as their fides are equal or unequal, and their Angles greater or leffer; whence they are denominated æquilateral, æquicrural, or scalenum, obtufangular, acutangular, or rectangular. But the Mind excluding out of its Idea, all these peculiar Properties and Distinctions frameth the general abstract Idea of a Triangle; which is neither æquilateral, æquicrural, nor scalenum, neither obtufangular, acutangular, nor rectangular, but all and none of these at once *. The same may be faid of the general abstract Idea of Colour, which is fomething distinct from and exclusive of Blue, Red, Green, Yellow, and every other particular Colour, including only that general Essence in which they all agree. And what has been faid of these three general Names, and the abstract general Ideas they stand for may be applied to all others. For you must know, that particular Things or Ideas being infinite, if each were marked or fignified by a distinct proper Name, Words must have been innumerable, and Language an endless impossible thing. Hence it comes to pass, that appellative or general Names stand, immediately and properly, not for particular but for abstract general Ideas, which they never fail to excite in the mind, as oft as they are used to any fignificant Purpose. And without this, there cou'd be no Communication or Enlargement of Knowledge, no fuch thing as universal Science or Theorems of any kind. Now for understanding any Proposition or Discourse, it is sufficient that distinct Ideas are thereby raised in your mind, correspondent to those in the Speaker's, whether the Ideas so raised

arc

^{*} See Locke on Humane Understanding, b. 4. c. 7.

Dial. VII. PHILOSOPHER. 323 are particular or only abstract and general Ideas. Forasmuch, nevertheless, as these are not so obvious and familiar to vulgar minds, it happens that some Men may think they have no Idea at all, when they have not a particular Idea; but the truth is, you had the abstract general Idea of Man. in the instance assigned, wherein you thought you had none. After the fame manner, when it is faid, that the three Angles of a Triangle are equal to two right ones; or that Colour is the Object of Sight, it is evident the Words do not stand for this or that Triangle or Colour, but for abstract general Ideas, excluding every thing peculiar to the Individuals, and including only the universal Nature common to the whole kind of Triangles or of Colours.

VI. EUPH. Tell me, Alcipbron, are those abstract general Ideas clear and distinct? They are above all others clear and distinct, being the only proper Object of Science, which is altogether conversant about Universals. EUPH. And do you not think it very possible for any Man to know, whether he has this or that clear and distinct Idea or no? ALC. Doubtless. To know this he needs only examine his own Thoughts and look into his own mind. EUPH. But upon looking into my own mind, I do not find that I have or can have these general abstract Ideas of a Man or Triangle abovementioned, or of Colour prescinded from all particular Colours *. Though I thut mine Eyes, and use mine utmost Efforts, and reflect on all that passeth in my own mind, I find it utterly impossible to form such Ideas. ALC. To reflect with due Attention and turn the mind inward

^{*} See the Introduction to a Treatife concerning the Principles of Humane Knowledge Printed in the Year MDCCX.

where the absurdity of abstract Ideas is fully considered.

Dial. VII. THE MINUTE 324 ward upon it felf, is a difficult Task and not every one's Talent. EUPH. Not to infift on what you allowed, that every one might eafily know for himfelf whether he has this or that Idea or no: I am tempted to think no body else can form those Ideas any more than I can. Pray, Alcipbron, which are those things you wou'd call absolutely impossible? ALC. Such as include a Contradiction. EUPH. Can you frame an Idea of what includes a Contradiction? ALC. I cannot. EUPH. Confequently whatever is absolutely impossible you cannot form an Idea of. ALC. This I grant. EUPH. But can a Colour or Triangle, fuch as you describe their abstract general Ideas, really exist? ALC. It is absolutely impossible such things shou'd exist in Nature. EUPH. Shou'd it not follow then that they cannot exist in your mind, or in others that you cannot conceive or frame an Idea of them? ALC. You feem Euphranor not to distinguish between pure Intellect and Imagination. Abstract general Ideas I take to be the Object of pure Intellect, which may conceive them although they cannot perhaps be imagined. EUPH. I do not perceive that I can by any Faculty, whether of Intellect or Imagination, conceive or frame an Idea of that which is impossible and includes a Contradiction. And I am very much at a loss to account for your admitting that in common Instances, which you wou'd make an Argument against Divine Faith and Mysteries.

VII. ALC. There must be some mistake in this, How is it possible there shou'd be general Knowledge without general Propositions, or these without general Names, which cannot be without general Ideas by standing for which they become general? EUPH. But may not words become general, by being made to stand indiscriminately for all particular Ideas, which from a mutual Resem-

blance

blance belong to the same kind, without the Intervention of any abstract general Idea? ALC. Is there then no such thing as a general Idea? EUPH. May we not admit general Ideas, though we shou'd not admit them to be made by abstraction, or though we shou'd not allow of general abstract Ideas? To me it feems, a particular Idea may become general by being used to stand for or reprefent other Ideas; and that, general Knowledge is conversant about Signs or general Ideas made such by their fignification; and which are confidered rather in their relative Capacity, and as substituted for others, than in their own Nature, or for their own fake. A Black Line, for Instance, an Inch long, though in it felf particular, may yet become Universal, being used as a Sign to stand for any Line whatfoever. ALC. It is your Opinion then, that words become general by representing an indefinite Number of particular Ideas. EUPH. It feems fo to me. ALC. Whenever therefore I hear a general Name, it must be supposed to excite some one or other particular Idea of that Species in my mind. EUPH. I cannot fay fo neither. Pray, Alcipbron, doth it feem to you necessary, that as often as the word Man occurs in Reading or Discourse, you must form in your Mind the Idea of a particular Man? ALC. I own, it doth not: And not finding particular Ideas always fuggested by the Words, I was led to think I had abstract general Ideas suggested by them. And this is the Opinion of all Thinking Men who are agreed, the only use of Words is to And indeed what other use can we fuggest Ideas. affign them?

VIII. EUPH. Be the use of Words or Names what it will, I can never think it is to do things impossible. Let us then inquire what it is? and see if we can make Sense of our daily Practice.

Words it is agreed are Signs: It may not therefore be amiss to examine the use of other Signs in order to know that of Words. Counters, for instance, at a Card-Table are used, not for their own fake, but only as Signs fubstituted for Money as Words are for Ideas. Say now Alcipbron, is it necessary every time these Counters are used throughout the whole Progress of a Game, to frame an Idea of the diftinct Sum or Value that each represents? ALC. By no means: It is sufficient the Players at first agree on their respective Values, and at last substitute those Values in their stead. EUPH. And in casting up a Sum, where the figures stand for Pounds, Shillings, and Pence, do you think it necessary, throughout the whole Progress of the Operation, in each Step to form Ideas of Pounds, Shillings, and Pence? ALC. I do not, it will suffice if in the Conclusion those Figures direct our Actions with respect to Things. EUPH. From hence it feems to follow that Words may not be infignificant, although they shou'd not, every time they are used, excite the Ideas they fignify in our Minds, it being fufficient, that we have it in our power to substitute Things or Ideas for their Signs when there is occasion. It feems also to follow, that there may be another use of Words, besides that of marking and suggesting distinct Ideas, to wit, the influencing our Conduct and Actions; which may be done either by forming Rules for us to act by, or by raifing certain Passions, Dispositions, and Emotions in our Minds. A Discourse, therefore, that directs how to act or excites to the doing or forbearance of an Action may, it feems, be useful and fignificant, although the Words whereof it is composed shou'd not bring each a distinct Idea into our Minds. ALC. It feems fo. EUPH. Pray tell me, Alcipbron, is not an Idea altogether inactive? ALC. It is. EUPH.

An Agent therefore, an active Mind, or Spirit cannot be an Idea or like an Idea. Whence it shou'd feem to follow, that those Words which denote an active Principle, Soul, or Spirit do not, in a strict and proper Sense, stand for Ideas: And yet they are not infignificant neither: fince I understand what is signified by the term I, or my felf, or know what it means although it be no Idea, nor like an Idea, but that which thinks and wills and apprehends Ideas and operates about them. ALC. What wou'd you infer from this? EUPH. What hath been inferred already, that Words may be fignificant although they do not stand for Ideas *. The contrary whereof having been prefumed feems to have produced the Doctrine of abstract Ideas. ALC. Will you not allow then that the Mind can abstract? EUPH. I do not deny it may abstract in a certain sense, inasmuch as those things that can really exist, or be really perceived afunder, may be conceived afunder, or abstracted one from the other; for instance a Man's Head from his Body, Colour from Motion, Figure from Weight. But it will not thence follow, that the Mind can frame abstract general Ideas, which appear to be impossible. ALC. And yet it is a current Opinion, that every fubstantive Name marks out and exhibits to the Mind one distinct Idea separate from all others. EUPH. Pray, Alcipbron, is not the Word Number such a fubstantive Name? ALC. It is. EUPH. Do but try now whether you can frame an Idea of Number in abstract exclusive of all Signs, Words and Things number'd. I profess, for my own part I ALC. Can it be so hard a matter to cannot.

^{*} See the Principles of Humane Knowledge. Sect. 135. and the Introduction. Sect. 20.

form a simple Idea of Number, the Object of a most evident demonstrable Science? Hold, let me fee, if I can't abstract the Idea of Number, from the numeral Names and Characters, and all particular numerable things. Upon which Alcipbron paused a while and then said; to confess the Truth I do not find that I can. EUPH. But though, it feems, neither you nor I can form distinct simple Ideas of Number, we can nevertheless make a very proper and fignificant use of numeral Names. They direct us in the disposition and management of our Affairs, and are of fuch necessary use, that we shou'd not know how to do without them. And yet, if other Mens Faculties may be judged of by mine, to attain a precife simple abstract Idea of Number, is as difficult as to comprehend any

Mystery in Religion.

IX. But to come to your own Instance, let us examine what Idea we can frame of Force abstract-

examine what Idea we can frame of Force abstracted from Body, Motion, and outward fenfible Effects. For my felf, I do not find that I have or can have any fuch Idea. ALC. Surely every one knows what is meant by Force. EUPH. And yet I question whether every one can form a distinct Idea of Force. Let me intreat you, Alcipbron, be not amused by Terms, lay aside the word Force, and exclude every other thing from your Thoughts. and then see what precise Idea you have of Force. ALC. Force is that in Bodies which produceth Motion and other fensible Effects. EUPH. It is then fomething distinct from those Effects. ALC. It is. EUPH. Be pleafed now to exclude the confideration of its Subject and Effects, and contemplate Force it felf in its own precise Idea. ALC. I profess I find it no such easy matter. EUPH. Take your own Advice, and shut your eyes to affift your Meditation. Upon this Alciphron having closed his eyes, and mused a few Mi-

Dial. VII. PHILOSOPHER. nutes, declared he cou'd make nothing of it. And that, replied Euphranor, which it feems neither you nor I can frame an Idea of, by your own Remark of Mens Minds and Faculties being made much alike, we may suppose others have no more an Idea of than we. ALC. We may. EUPH. But, notwithstanding all this, it is certain there are many Speculations, Reasonings, and Disputes, refined Subtilties and nice Distinctions about this fame Force. And to explain its Nature, and distinguish the several notions or kinds of it, the Terms Gravity, Reaction, vis inertia, vis insita, vis impressa, vis mortua, vis viva, impetus, momentum, folicitatio, conatus, and divers other fuch like Expressions have been used by learned Men: And no small Controversies have arisen about the Notions or Definitions of these terms. It had puzzled Men to know whether Force is spiritual or corporeal, whether it remains after Action, how it is transferred from one Body to another. Strange Paradoxes have been framed about its Nature, Properties, and Proportions: For instance, that contrary Forces may at once subsist in the same quiescent Body: That the Force of Percussion in a small particle is Infinite: For which and other Curiofities of the fame fort, you may confult Borellus de vi percussionis, the Lezioni Academiche of Toricelli, the Exercitations of Hermanus, and other Writers. It is well known to the learned World, what a Controversy hath been carried on between Mathematicians, particularly Monsieur Leibnitz and Monsieur Papin in the Leipsic Acta Eruditorum about the Proportion of Forces, whether they be each to other in a Proportion compounded of the fimple Proportions of the Bodies and the Celerities, or in one compounded of the simple Proportion of the Bodies and the duplicate Proportion of the Celerities? A Point, it feems, not yet agreed: Y 3 As

X. EUPH. And yet, I prefume, you allow there are very evident Propositions or Theorems relating to Force, which contain useful Truths: for instance, that a Body with conjunct Forces defcribes the Diagonal of a Parallelogram, in the fame time that it wou'd the Sides with separate. Is not this a Principle of very extensive use? Doth not the Doctrine of the Composition and Resolution of Forces depend upon it, and, in confequence thereof, numberless Rules and Theorems directing Men how to act, and explaining Phanomena throughout the Mechanics and mathematical Philosophy? And if, by considering this Doctrine of Force, Men arrive at the Knowledge of many Inventions in Mechanics, and are taught to frame Engines, by means of which things difficult and otherwise impossible may be performed, and if the fame Doctrine which is so beneficial here below,

ferveth also as a Key to discover the Nature of the Celestial Motions, shall we deny that it is of use. either in Practice or Speculation, because we have no distinct Idea of Force? Or that which we admit with regard to Force, upon what pretence can we deny concerning Grace? If there are Queries, Disputes, Perplexities, diversity of Notions and Opinions about the one, fo there are about the other also: If we can form no precise distinct Idea of the one, so neither can we of the other. Ought we not therefore by a parity of Reason to conclude, there may be divers true and useful Propositions concerning the one as well as the other? And that Grace may be an Object of our Faith and influence our Life and Actions, as a Principle destructive of evil habits and productive of good ones, although we cannot attain a diffinct Idea of it, separate or abstracted from God the Author, from Man the Subject, and from Virtue and Piety its Effects?

XI. Shall we not admit the fame Method of arguing, the same Rules of Logic, Reason, and good Sense to obtain in things Spiritual, and things Corporeal, in Faith and Science, and shall we not use the same Candour, and make the same Allowances, in examining the Revelations of God and the Inventions of Men? For ought I fee, that Philosopher cannot be free from Bias and Prejudice, or be faid to weigh things in an equal Balance who fhall maintain the Doctrine of Force and reject that of Grace, who shall admit the abstract Idea of a Triangle, and at the same time ridicule the Holy Trinity. But, however partial or prejudiced other Minute Philosophers might be, you have laid it down for a Maxim, that the fame Logic which obtains in other Matters must be admitted in Religion. LYS. I think, Alcipbron, it wou'd be more prudent to abide by the way of Wit and Humour, than thus to try Religion by the dry

Y 4

Test of Reason and Logic. ALC. Fear not: By all the Rules of right Reason, it is absolutely impossible that any Mystery, and least of all the Trinity shou'd really be the Object of Man's Faith. EUPH. I do not wonder you thought fo, as long as you maintained that no Man cou'd affent to a Proposition, without perceiving or framing in his Mind diftinct Ideas marked by the Terms of it. But although Terms are Signs, yet having granted that those Signs may be fignificant, though they shou'd not suggest Ideas represented by them, provided they ferve to regulate and Influence our Wills, Passions, or Conduct, you have consequently granted, that the Mind of Man may affent to Propositions containing such Terms, when it is so directed or affected by them, notwithstanding it shou'd not perceive distinct Ideas marked by those Terms. Whence it feems to follow, that a Man may believe the Doctrine of the Trinity, if he finds it revealed in Holy Scripture, That the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are God, and that there is but one God? Although he doth not frame in his Mind, any abstract or distinct Ideas of Trinity, Substance, or Personality, provided, that this Doctrine of a Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier makes proper Impressions on his Mind, producing therein, Love, Hope, Gratitude, and Obedience, and thereby becomes a lively operate Principle influencing his Life and Actions, agreeably to that Notion of faving Faith which is required in a Christian. This I say, whether right or wrong, seems to follow from your own Principles and Concessions. But for further fatisfaction, it may not be amiss to inquire, whether there be any thing parallel to this Christian Faith in the Minute Philofophy. Suppose, a fine Gentleman or Lady of Fashion, who are too much employ'd to think for themselves, and are only Free-thinkers at second

hand,

hand, have the advantage of being betimes initiated in the Principles of your Sect, by conversing with Men of Depth and Genius, who have often declared it to be their Opinion, the World is governed either by Fate or by Chance, it matters not which; will you deny it possible for such Persons to yield their Affent to either of these Propositions? ALC. I will not. EUPH. And may not fuch their Affent be properly called Faith? ALC. It may. EUPH. And yet it is possible, those Disciples of the Minute Philosophy may not dive so deep, as to be able to frame any abstract, or precise, or any determinate Idea whatsoever, either of Fate or of Chance. ALC. This too I grant. EUPH. So that according to you, this fame Gentleman or Lady may be faid to believe or have Faith where they have not Ideas. ALC. They may. EUPH. And may not this Faith or Persuasion produce real Effects, and shew itself in the Conduct and Tenor of their Lives, freeing them from the Fears of Superstition, and giving them a true Relish of the World, with a noble Indolence or Indifference about what comes after. ALC. It may. EUPH. And may not Christians, with equal Reason, be allowed to believe the Divinity of our Saviour, or that in him God and Man make one Person, and be verily persuaded thereof, so far as for such Faith or Belief to become a real Principle of Life and Conduct, inafmuch as by Virtue of fuch Perfuasion they fubmit to his Government, believe his Doctrine, and practife his Precepts, although they frame no abstract Idea of the Union between the Divine and Human Nature; nor may be able to clear up the Notion of Person to the Contentment of a Minute Philosopher. To me it seems evident that if none but these who had nicely examined, and cou'd themselves explain, the Principle of Individuation in Man, or untie the Knots and answer

THE MINUTE Dial. VII. 334 the Objections, which may be raifed even about Humane Personal Identity, wou'd require of us to explain the Divine Mysteries, we shou'd not be often called upon for a clear and diffinct Idea of Perfon in relation to the Trinity, nor wou'd the Difficulties on that Head be often objected to our Faith. ALC. Methinks, there is no fuch Mystery in Perfonal Identity. EUPH. Pray in what do you take it to confift? ALC. In Consciousness. EUPH. Whatever is possible may be supposed. ALC. It may. EUPH. We will suppose now (which is possible in the Nature of Things, and reported to be fact) that a Person, through some violent Accident or Diftemper, shou'd fall into such a total Oblivion, as to lofe all Consciousness of his past Life, and former Ideas. I ask, is he not still the same Person? ALC. He is the same Man, but not the fame Person. Indeed you ought not to suppose that a Person loseth its former Consciousness; for this is impossible, though a Man perhaps may: but then becomes another Person. In the same Person, it must be owned, some old Ideas may be loft, and some new ones got; but a total Change is inconfistent with Identity of Person. EUPH. Let us then suppose that a Person hath Ideas, and is conscious during a certain space of Time, which we will divide into three equal Parts, whereof the later Terms are marked by the Letters A, B, C. In the first Part of Time, the Person gets a certain Number of Ideas, which are retained in A: During the fecond Part of Time, he retains one half of his old Ideas, and lofeth the other half, in place of which he acquires as many new ones: So that in B his Ideas are half old and half new. And in the third Part, we suppose him to lose the Remainder of the Ideas acquired in the First, and to get new ones in their stead, which are retained in C, together with those acquired in the second Part of Time. Is this a possible Supposition? ALC. It is. EUPH. Upon these Premisses I am tempted to think, one may demonstrate, that Personal Identity doth not confift in Consciousness. ALC. As how? EUPH. You shall judge; but thus it feems to me. The Person in A and B are the fame, being conscious of common Ideas by suppofition. The Person in B is (for the same Reason) one and the fame with the Person in C. Therefore the Person in A, is the same with the Person in C, by that undoubted Axiom, Que conveniunt uni tertio conveniunt inter fe. But the Person in C hath no Idea in common with the Person in A. Therefore Personal Identity doth not confist in Consciousness. What do you think, Alcipbron, is not this a plain Inference? ALC. I tell you what I think: You will never affift my Faith, by puzzling my Knowledge.

XII. There is, if I mistake not, a practical Faith, or Affent, which sheweth it felf in the Will and Actions of a Man, although his Understanding may not be furnished with those abstract, precife, distinct Ideas, which, whatever a Philospher may pretend, are acknowledged to be above the Talents of common Men; among whom, neverthelefs, may be found, even according to your own Concession, many Instances of such practical Faith, in other matters which do not concern Religion. What shou'd hinder therefore, but that Doctrines relating to Heavenly Mysteries, might be taught in this faving Sense to vulgar Minds, which you may well think incapable of all Teaching and Faith in the Sense you suppose. Which mistaken Sense, faid Crito, has given occasion to much profane and misapplied Raillery. But all this may very justly be retorted on the Minute Philosophers themselves, who confound Scholasticism with Christianity, and impute to other Men those Perplexi-

Dial. VII. THE MINUTE 336 ties. Chimæras, and inconfistent Ideas, which are often the Workmanship of their own Brains, and proceed from their own wrong way of Thinking. Who does not fee that fuch an ideal abstracted Faith is never thought of by the Bulk of Christians, Husbandmen, for Instance, Artisans or Servants? Or what Footsteps are there in the Holy Scripture to make us think, that the wiredrawing of abstracted Ideas was a Task injoined either Jews or Christians? Is there any thing in the Law or the Prophets, the Evangelists or Apostles that looks like it? Every one whose Understanding is not perverted by Science falfly fo called, may fee, the faving Faith of Christians is quite of another kind, a vital operative principle, productive of Charity and Obedience. ALC. What are we to think then of the Disputes and Decisions of the famous Council of Nice, and so many subsequent Councils? What was the Intention of those venerable Fathers the Homoousians and the Homoiousians? Why did they disturb themselves and the World with hard Words, and subtile Controversies? CRI. Whatever their Intention was, it cou'd not be to beget nice abstracted Ideas of Mysteries in the Minds of common Christians, this being evidently impossible: Nor doth it appear that the Bulk of Christian Men did in those Days think it any Part of their Duty, to lay aside the Words, shut their Eyes, and frame those abstracted Ideas; any more than Men now do of Force, Time, Number, or feveral other things, about which they nevertheless believe, know, argue and dispute. To me it seems, that, whatever was the Source of their Controversies, and howfoever they were managed, wherein Humane Infirmity must be supposed to have had its Share, the main End was not on either fide, to convey precise positive Ideas to the Minds of Men, by the use of those contested Terms, but rather a negative

XIII. It feems, that what hath been now faid may be applied to other Mysteries of our Religion-Original Sin, for Instance, a Man may find it impossible to form an Idea of in abstract, or of the manner of its Transmission, and yet the Belief thereof may produce in his Mind a salutary Sense of his own Unworthiness, and the Goodness of his Redeemer: from whence may follow good Habits, and from them good Actions, the genuine Effects of Faith, which considered in its true Light, is a thing neither repugnant nor incomprehensible, as some Men wou'd persuade us, but suited even to vulgar Capacities, placed in the Will and Affections rather than in the Understanding, and producing

* Sozomen. 1. 2. c. 8.

[†] Hieronym. ad Pammachium & Oceanum de erroribus Origenis.

THE MINUTE Dial. VII. 338 cing holy Lives, rather than fubtile Theories. Faith, I fay, is not an indolent Perception but an operative Persuasion of Mind, which ever worketh forme fuitable Action, Disposition or Emotion in those who have it; as it were easy to prove and illustrate by innumerable instances, taken from Humane Affairs. And, indeed, while the Christian Religion is confidered as an Institution fitted to ordinary Minds, rather than to the nicer Talents, whether improved or puzzled, of speculative Men; and our Notions about Faith are accordingly taken from the Commerce of the World, and Practice of Mankind, rather than from the peculiar Systems of Refiners; it will, I think, be no difficult Matter to conceive and justify the Meaning and Use of our Belief of Mysteries, against the most confident Affertions and Objections of the Minute Philosophers, who are eafily to be caught in those very Snares, which they have foun and foread for others. And that Humour of Controversy, the Mother and Nurse of Heresies, wou'd doubtless very much abate, if it was confidered that things are to be rated, not by the Colour, Shape, or Stamp, fo truly as by the Weight. If the Moment of Opinions had been by some litigious Divines made the Meafure of their Zeal, it might have spared much Trouble both to themselves and others. Certainly one that takes his Notions of Faith, Opinion, and Affent from Common Sense, and Common Use, and has maturely weighed the Nature of Signs and Language, will not be fo apt to controvert the Wording of a Mystery, or to break the

XIV. ALC. It feems, Euphranor and you, wou'd perfuade me into an Opinion, that there is nothing fo fingularly abfurd as we are apt to think, in the Belief of Mysteries; and that a Man need not re-

Peace of the Church, for the fake of retaining or

rejecting a Term.

nounce his Reason to maintain his Religion. But if this were true, how comes it to pass, that, in proportion as men abound in Knowledge, they dwindle in Faith? EUPH. O Alciphron, I have learned from you that there is nothing like going to the Bottom of things, and analyfing them into their first Principles. I shall therefore make an Effay of this Method for clearing up the Nature of Faith: with what Success, I shall leave you to determine; for I dare not pronounce myself on my own Judgment, whether it be right or wrong: But thus it feems to me. The Objections made to Faith are by no means an Effect of Knowledge. but proceed rather from an Ignorance of what Knowledge is; which Ignorance may posibly be found even in those who pass for Masters of this or that particular Branch of Knowledge. Science and Faith agree in this, that they both imply an Affent of the Mind: And, as the Nature of the First is most clear and evident, it shou'd be first confidered in order to cast a Light on the other. To trace things from their Original, it feems that the Humane Mind, naturally furnished with the Ideas of things particular and concrete, and being defign'd, not for the bare Intuition of Ideas, but for Action or Operation about them, and pursuing her own Happiness therein, stands in need of certain general Rules or Theorems to direct her Operations in this pursuit; the supplying which Want is the true, original, reasonable End of studying the Arts and Sciences. Now these Rules being general, it follows, that they are not to be obtained by the meer Confideration of the original Ideas, or particular Things, but by the means of Marks or Signs, which, being fo far forth univerfal. become the immediate Instruments and Materials of Science. It is not therefore by meer Contemplation of particular Things, and much less of their their abstract general Ideas, that the Mind makes her Progress, but by an apposite Choice and skilful Management of Signs: For Instance, Force and Number, taken in concrete with their Adjuncts, Subjects, and Signs, are what every one knows; and considered in abstract, so as making precise I-deas of themselves, they are what no Body can comprehend. That their abstract Nature, therefore, is not the Foundation of Science, is plain: And that barely considering their Ideas in concrete, is not the Method to advance in the respective Sciences, is what every one that reslects may see; nothing being more evident, than that one who can neither write nor read, in common Use understands the meaning of Numerical Words, as well as

the best Philosopher or Mathematician.

XV. But here lies the Difference: the one, who understands the Notation of Numbers, by means thereof is able to express briefly and distinctly all the Variety and Degrees of Number, and to perform with ease and dispatch several arithmetical Operations, by the help of general Rules. Of all which operations as the Use in Humane Life is very evident, fo it is no less evident, that the performing them depends on the aptness of the Notation. If we suppose rude Mankind without the Use of Language, it may be presumed, they wou'd be ignorant of Arithmetic: But the Use of Names, by the Repetition whereof in a certain Order they might express endless Degrees of Number, wou'd be the first Step towards that Science. The next Step wou'd be, to devise proper Marks of a permanent Nature, and visible to the Eye, the Kind and Order whereof must be chose with Judgment, and accommodated to the Names. Which Marking, or Notation, wou'd, in Proportion as it was apt and regular, facilitate the Invention and Application of general Rules, to affift the Mind in reasoning,

reasoning, and judging, in extending, recording, and communicating its Knowledge about Numbers: in which Theory and Operations, the Mind is immediately occupied about the Signs or Notes, by Meditation of which it is directed to act about Things, or Number in concrete (as the Logicians call it) without ever confidering the fimple, abstract, intellectual, general Idea of Number. I imagine one need not think much to be convinced. that the Science of Arithmetic, in its Rife, Operations, Rules, and Theorems, is altogether conversant about the artificial Use of Signs, Names. These Names and Characters are and Characters. universel, inasmuch as they are Signs. The Names are referred to things, and the Characters to Names, and both to Operation. The Names being few, and proceeding by a certain Analogy. the Characters will be more useful, the simpler they are, and the more aptly they express this Analogy. Hence the old Notation by Letters was more useful than Words written at length: And the modern Notation by Figures, expressing the Progression or Analogy of the Names by their simple Places, is much preferable to that for Ease and Expedition, as the Invention of Algebraical Symbols is to this for extensive and general Use. As Arithmetic and Algebra are Sciences of great Clearness, Certainty, and Extent, which are immediately conversant about Signs, upon the skilful Use and Management whereof they intirely depend, fo a little Attention to them may possibly help us to judge of the Progress of the Mind in other Sciences, which, though differing in Nature, Defign, and Object, may yet agree in the general Methods of Proof and Inquiry.

XVI. If I mistake not, all Sciences, so far as they are universal and demonstrable by Humane Reason, will be found conversant about Signs as

THE MINUTE Dial. VII. 342 their immediate Object, though these in the Application are referred to Things: the Reason whereof is not difficult to comprehend. For as the Mind is better acquainted with some fort of Objects, which are earlier suggested to it, strike it more fenfibly, or are more eafily comprehended than others it is naturally led to substitute those Objects for fuch as are more fubtile, fleeting, or difficult to conceive. Nothing, I fay, is more natural, than to make the Things we know a Step towards those we do not know; and to explain. and represent Things less familiar by others which are more fo. Now it is certain we imagine before we reflect, and we perceive by fense before we imagine; and of all our Senses the Sight is the most clear, diffinct, various, agreeable, and comprehenfive. Hence it is natural to affift the Intellect by the Imagination, the Imagination by Senfe, and the other Senses by Sight. Hence, Figures, Metaphors, and Types. We illustrate spiritual Things by corporeal; we substitute Sounds for Thoughts, and written Letters for Sounds; Emblems, Symbols, and Hieroglyphics for things too obscure to ftrike, and too various or too fleeting to be re-We substitute Things imaginable, for Things intelligible, sensible Things for imaginable, smaller Things for those that are too great to comprehend eafily, and greater Things for fuch as are too small to be discerned distinctly, present Things for absent, permanent for perishing, and visible for invisible. Hence the Use of Models and Diagrams. Hence right Lines are substituted for Time, Velocity, and other things of very different Natures. Hence we speak of Spirits in a figurative Style, expressing the Operations of the Mind by Allusions and Terms, borrowed from fenfible Things, fuch as apprehend, conceive, reflect. discourse, and such like: And hence those Allegories

Dial. VII. PHILOSOPHER. 343 ries which illustrate Things intellectual by Visions exhibited to the Fancy. Plato, for Instance, represents the Mind presiding in her Vehicle by the Driver of a winged Chariot, which fometimes moults and droops: this Chariot is drawn by two Horses, the one good and of a good Race, the other of a contrary kind, fymbolically expressing the Tendency of the Mind towards the Divinity, as the foars or is born aloft by two Instincts like Wings, the one in the Intellect towards Truth, the other in the Will towards Excellence, which Instincts moult or are weakned by fenfual Inclinations, expressing also her alternate Elevations and Depredations, the Struggles between Reason and Appetite, like Horses that go an unequal Pace, or draw different Ways, embarrassing the Soul in her Progress to Perfection. I am inclined to think the Doctrine of Signs a Point of great Importance, and

general Extent, which, if duly considered, wou'd cast no small light upon Things, and afford a just

and genuine Solution of many Difficulties.

XVII. Thus much, upon the whole, may be faid of all Signs: That they do not always suggest Ideas fignified to the Mind, That when they fuggest Ideas, they are not general abstract Ideas: That they have other Uses besides barely standing for and exhibiting Ideas, fuch as raising proper Emotions, producing certain Dispositions or Habits of Mind, and directing our Actions in pursuit of that Happiness, which is the ultimate End and Defign, the Primary Spring and Motive, that fets rational Agents at work: That the true End of Speech, Reason, Science, Faith, Assent in all its different Degrees, is not meerly, or principally, or always the imparting or acquiring of Ideas, but rather fomething of an active, operative Nature, tending to a conceived Good, which may fometimes be obtained, not only although the Ideas marked

Z 2

THE MINUTE Dial. VII. 344 marked are not offered to the Mind, but even although there shou'd be no possibility of offering or exhibiting any fuch Idea to the Mind: For Instance, the Algebraic Mark, which denotes the Root of a Negative Square, hath its Use in Logistic Operations, although it be impossible to form an Idea of any such Quantity. And what is true of Algebraic Signs, is also true of Words and Language, modern Algebra being in fact a more short, apposite, and artificial Sort of Language, and it being possible to express by Words at length, though less conveniently, all the Steps of an Algebraical Process. And it must be confessed, that even the Mathematical Sciences themselves, which above all others are reckoned the most clear and certain, if they are considered, not as Instruments to direct our Practice, but as Speculations to employ our Curiofity, will be found to fall short in many Instances of those clear and distinct Ideas, which, it feems, the Minute Philosophers of this Age, whether knowingly or ignorantly, expect and infift upon in the Mysteries of Religion.

XVIII. Be the Science or Subject what it will, whenfoever Men quit Particulars for Generalities, things Concrete for Abstractions, when they for-fake practical Views, and the useful Purposes of Knowledge for barren Speculation, considering Means and Instruments as ultimate Ends, and labouring to obtain precise Ideas which they suppose indiscriminately annexed to all Terms, they will be sure to embarrass themselves with Difficulties and Disputes. Such are those which have sprung up in Geometry about the Nature of the Angle of Contact, the Doctrines of Proportions, of Indivisibles Infinitesimals, and divers other Points; notwithstanding all which, that Science is very rightly esteemed an excellent and useful one, and is really

found to be so in many Occasions of Humane Life, wherein it governs and directs the Actions of Men. so that by the Aid or Influence thereof those Operations become just and accurate, which wou'd otherwise be faulty and uncertain. And from a parity of Reason, we shou'd not conclude any other Doctrines which govern, influence or direct the Mind of Man to be, any more than that, the less true or excellent, because they afford matter of Controverfy and useless Speculation to curious and licentious wits: Particularly those Articles of our Christian Faith, which, in proportion as they are believed, persuade, and, as they persuade, influence the Lives and Actions of Men. As to the perplexity of Contradictions and abstracted Notions in all parts whether of Humane Science or Divine Faith, Cavillers may equally object, and unwary Persons incur, while the judicious avoid it. There is no need to depart from the received Rules of Reasoning to justify the Belief of Christians. And if any pious Men think otherwise, it may be supposed an Effect, not of Religion, or of Reason, but only of Humane Weakness. If this Age be fingularly productive of Infidels, I shall not therefore conclude it to be more knowing, but only more prefuming, than former Ages: And their Conceit, I doubt is not the Effect of Consideration. To me it feems, that the more thoroughly and extensively any Man shall consider and scan the Principles, Objects, and Methods of proceeding in Arts and Sciences, the more he will be convinced, there is no weight in those plausible Objections that are made against the Mysteries of Faith, which it will be no difficult matter for him to maintain or justify in the received Method of arguing, on the common Principles of Logic, and by numberless avow'd parallel Cases, throughout the feveral Branches of Humane Knowledge, in all Z 3 which 346 THE MINUTE Dial. VII. which the Supposition of abstract Ideas creates the same Difficulties.

XIX. ALC. I will allow, Eupbranor, this Reafoning of yours to have all the Force you meant it shou'd have. I freely own there may be Mysteries: That we may believe, where we do not understand: And that Faith may be of Use although its Object is not distinctly apprehended. word, I grant there may be Faith and Mysteries in other Things but not in Religion: And that for this plain Reason: Because it is absurd to suppose, there shou'd be any such Thing-as Religion; and if there be no Religion it follows there cannot be Religious Faith or Mysteries. Religion, it is evident, implies the Worship of a God; which Worship supposeth Rewards and Punishments, which supposeth Merits and Demerits, Actions good and evil, and these suppose Humane Liberty, a thing impossible; and confequently Religion a thing built thereon must be an unreasonable absurd thing. There can be no rational Hopes or Fears where there is no Guilt, nor any Guilt where there is nothing done, but what unavoidably follows from the Structure of the World and the Laws of Motion. Corporeal Objects strike on the Organs of Sense. whence enfues a Vibration in the Nerves, which, being communicated to the Soul or Animal Spirit in the Brain or Root of the Nerves, produceth therein that Motion called Volition: And this produceth a new Determination in the Spirits, causing them to flow in fuch Nerves as must necessarily by the Laws of Mechanism produce such certain This being the Case, it follows that Actions. those things which vulgarly pass for Humane Actions are to be esteemed Mechanical, and that they are falfely ascribed to a free Principle. There is therefore no Foundation for Praise or Blame, Fear or Hope, Reward or Punishment, nor consequently

imagine, Alciphron, if I rightly understand you, that Man is a fort of Organ played on by outward Objects, which according to the different shape and texture of the Nerves produce different Motions and Effects therein. ALC. Man may, indeed, be fitly compared to an Organ; but a Puppet is the very Thing. You must know, that certain Particles iffuing forth in right Lines from all sensible Objects compose so many Rays, or Filaments, which drive, draw, and actuate every part of the Soul and Body of Man, just as Threads or Wires do the joints of that little wooden Machine vulgarly called a Puppet: With this only difference that the latter are gross and visible to common eyes, whereas the former are too fine and subtile to be discerned by any but a sagacious Free-thinker. This admirably accounts for all those Operations, which we have been taught to ascribe to a thinking Principle within us. EUPH. This is an ingenious Thought, and must be of great use in freeing Men from all Anxiety about Moral Notions, as it transfers the Principle of Action from the Humane Soul to things outward and foreign. But I have my Scruples about it. For you suppose the Mind in a literal fense to be moved and its Volitions to be meer Motions. Now if another shou'd affirm, as it is not impossible some or other may, that the Soul is incorporeal, and that Motion is one thing and Volition another, I wou'd fain know how you cou'd make your Point clear to fuch a one. It must be owned very clear to those who admit the Soul to be corporeal, and all her Acts to be but fo many Motions. Upon this Supposition, indeed, the Light wherein you place Humane Nature is no less true, than it is fine and new. But let any

one deny this Supposition, which is easily done, and

THE MINUTE 348 Dial. VII. and the whole Superstructure falls to the ground. If we grant the abovementioned Points, I will not deny a fatal Necessity must ensue. But I see no reason for granting them. On the contrary it feems plain, that Motion and Thought are two Things as really and as manifestly distinct as a Triangle and a Sound. It feems therefore, that in order to prove the necessity of Humane Actions, you suppose what wants Proof as much as the very

Point to be proved.

XX. ALC. But supposing the Mind incorporeal, I shall, nevertheless, be able to prove my Point. Not to amuse you with far fetched Arguments, I shall only defire you to look into your own Breast and observe how things pass there, when an Object offers it felf to the Mind. First the Understanding considers it: In the next Place the Judgment decrees about it, as a thing to be chosen or rejected, to be omitted or done, in this or that manner: And this Decree of the Judgment doth necessarily determine the Will, whose Office is meerly to execute what is ordained by another Faculty: Confequently there is no fuch thing as Freedom of the Will: For that which is necessary cannot be free. In Freedom there shou'd be an Indifference to either fide of the Question, a Power to act or not to act, without prescription or controul: And without this Indifference and this Power, it is evident the Will cannot be free. But it is no less evident, that the Will is not indifferent in its Actions, being absolutely determined and governed by the Judgment. Now whatever moves the Judgment, whether the greatest present Uneasiness, or the greatest apparent Good, or whatever else it be, it is all one to the Point in hand. The Will being ever concluded and controlled by the Judgment is in all Cases alike under Necessity. There is, indeed, throughout the whole of Humane

you

you have the fundamental Point of our Freethinking Philosophy demonstrated different ways. EUPH. Tell me, Alcipbron, do you think it implies a Contradiction, that God shou'd make a Man Free? ALC. I do not. EUPH. It is then possible there may be such a thing. ALC. This I do not deny. EUPH. You can therefore conceive and suppose such a Free Agent. ALC. Admitting that I can; what then? EUPH. Wou'd not fuch an one think that he acted? ALC. He wou'd. EUPH. And condemn himself for some Actions and approve himself for others? ALC. This too I grant. EUPH. Wou'd he not think he deserved Reward or Punishment? ALC. He wou'd. EUPH. And are not all these Characters actually found in Man? ALC. They are. EUPH. Tell me now, what other Character of your supposed Free Agent may not actually be found in Man? For if there is none fuch, we must conclude that Man hath all the marks of a Free Agent. ALC. Let me see! I was certainly overseen in granting it possible, even for Almighty Power, to make such a thing as a Free Humane Agent. I wonder how I came to make fuch an abfurd Concession, after what had been, as I observed before, demonstrated fo many different ways. EUPH. O Alcipbron. it is vulgarly observed that Men judge of others by themselves. But in judging of me by this Rule, you may be mistaken. Many things are plain to one of your Sagacity, which are not fo to me, who am often bewildered rather than enlightened by those very Proofs, that with you pass for clear and evident. And, indeed, be the Inference never fo just, vet fo long as the Premises are not clear, I cannot be thoroughly convinced. You must give me leave therefore to propose some Questions, the Solution of which may perhaps shew what at present I am not able to discern. ALC. I shall leave what hath been faid with you, to consider and ruminate upon. It is now time to set out on our Journey; there is, therefore, no room for a long String of Ouestion and Answer.

XXI. EUPH. I shall then only beg leave in a fummary Manner, to make a Remark or two on what you have advanced. In the first place I obferve, you take that for granted which I cannot grant, when you affert whatever is certain the fame to be necessary. To me, Certain and Necesfary feem very different; there being nothing in the former notion that implies Constraint, nor confequently which may not confift with a Man's being accountable for his Actions. If it is foreseen that such an Action shall be done: May it not also be foreseen that it shall be an Effect of Humane Choice and Liberty? In the next place I observe, that you very nicely abstract and distinguish Actions of the Mind, Judgment, and Will: That you make use of such Terms as Power, Faculty, Act, Determination, Indifference, Freedom, Necessity, and the like, as if they flood for diffinct abstract Ideas: And that this Supposition seems to ensnare the Mind into the fame Perplexities and Errors. which, in all other Instances are observed to attend the Doctrine of Abstraction. It is self evident, that there is such a thing as Motion; and yet there have been found Philosophers, who, by refined Reasoning, wou'd undertake to prove there was no fuch thing. Walking before them was thought the proper Way to confute those ingenious Men-It is no less evident, that Man is a free Agent: and though by abstracted Reasonings you shou'd puzzle me, and feem to prove the contrary, yet fo long as I am conscious of my own Actions, this inward Evidence of plain Fact will bear me up against all your Reasonings, however subtile and refined. The confuting plain Points by obscure

ones, may perhaps convince me of the Ability of your Philosophers, but never of their Tenets. I cannot conceive why the acute Cratylus shou'd suppose a Power of Acting in the Appetite and Reafon, and none at all in the Will? Allowing, I fay, the Distinction of three such Beings in the Mind, I do not fee how this cou'd be true. But if I cannot abstract and distinguish so many Beings in the Soul of Man fo accurately as you do, I do not find it neceffary, fince it is evident to me in the gross and concrete that I am a free Agent. Nor will it avail to fay, the Will is governed by the Judgment, or determined by the Object, while, in every fudden common Case, I cannot discern nor abstract the Decree of the Judgment from the Command of the Will; while I know the fenfible Object to be abfolutely inert: And laftly, while I am conscious that I am an active Being, who can and do determine myself. If I shou'd suppose things spiritual to be corporeal, or refine things actual and real into general abstracted Notions, or by metaphysical Skill split things simple and individual into manifold Parts, I do not know what may follow: But if I take things as they are, and ask any plain untutored Man, whether he acts or is free in this or that particular Action, he readily affents, and I as readily believe him from what I find within. And thus, by an Induction of Particulars, I may conclude Man to be a free Agent, although I may be puzzled to define or conceive a Notion of Freedom in general and abstract. And if Man be free he is plainly accountable. But if you shall define, abstract, suppose, and it shall follow that according to your Definitions, Abstractions, and Suppofitions, there can be no Freedom in Man, and you shall thence infer that he is not accountable, I shall make bold to depart from your metaphyfical ab**ftracted** Dial. VII. PHILOSOPHER. 353
ftracted Sense, and appeal to the common Sense of
Mankind.

XXII. If we confider the Notions that obtain in the World of Guilt and Merit, Praise and Blame. Accountable and Unaccountable, we shall find the common Question in order to applaud or censure, acquit or condemn a Man, is whether he did fuch an Action? and whether he was himself when he did it? which comes to the same thing. It shou'd feem therefore that in the ordinary Commerce of Mankind, any Person is esteemed accountable simply as he is an Agent. And though you shou'd tell me that Man is inactive, and that the fensible Objects act upon him, yet my own Experience affures me of the contrary. I know I act, and what I act I am accountable for. And if this be true, the Foundation of Religion and Morality remains unshaken. Religion, I say is concerned no farther than that Man shou'd be Accountable: And this he is according to my Sense, and the common Sense of the World, if he acts; and that he doth act is felf evident. The Grounds, therefore, and Ends of Religion are fecured; whether your philosophic Notion of Liberty agrees with Man's Actions or no, and whether his Actions are certain or contingent, the Question being not whether he did it with a Free Will, or what determined his Will? not, whether it was certain or foreknown that he wou'd do it? but only whether he did it wilfully? as what must entitle him to the Guilt or Merit of it. ALC. But still, the Question recurs, whether Man be Free? EUPH. To determine this Queftion, ought we not first to determine what is meant by the word Free? ALC. We ought. EUPH. In my Opinion, a Man is faid to be Free, fo far forth as he can do what he will. Is this fo or is it not? ALC. It feems fo. EUPH. Man therefore acting according to his Will, is to be accountat the Minute Dial. VII. ed Free. ALC. This I admit to be true in the Vulgar Sense. But a Philosopher goes higher, and inquires whether Man be free to will? EUPH. That is, whether he can will as he wills? I know not how Philosophical it may be to ask this Question, but it seems very unintelligible. The Notions of Guilt and Merit, Justice and Reward are in the Minds of Men, antecedent to all Metaphysical Disquisitions: And according to those received natural Notions, it is not doubted that Man is accountable, that he acts, and is self-determined.

XXIII. But a Minute Philosopher shall, in virtue of wrong Suppositions, confound things most evidently distinct; Body, for Instance, with Spirit, Motion with Volition, Certainty with Necessity; and an Abstracter or Refiner shall so analyse the most simple instantaneous Act of the Mind, as to distinguish therein divers Faculties and Tendencies, Principles and Operations, Caufes and Effects: and having abstracted, supposed, and reasoned upon Principles gratuitous and obscure, such a one he will conclude it is no Act at all, and Man no Agent but a Puppet, or an Organ play'd on by outward Objects, and his Will a Top or a Football. And this paffeth for Philosophy and Freethinking. Perhaps this may be what it passeth for, but it by no means feems a natural or just way of Thinking. To me it feems, that if we begin from things particular and concrete, and thence proceed to general Notions and Conclusions, there will be no Difficulty in this Matter. But if we begin with Generalities, and lay our Foundation in abstract Ideas, we shall find our selves entangled and lost in a Labyrinth of our own making. I need not obferve, what every one must fee, the ridicule of proving Man no Agent, and yet pleading for free Thought and Action, of fetting up at once for Advocates

Dial. VII. PHILOSOPHER. vocates of Liberty and Necessity. I have hastily thrown together these Hints or Remarks, on what you call a fundamental Article of the Minute Philosophy, and your Method of proving it, which feems to furnish an admirable Specimen of the Sophistry of abstract Ideas. If in this fummary way I have been more dogmatical than became me, you must excuse what you occasioned, by declining a joint and leifurely Examination of the Truth. ALC. I think we have examined Matters sufficiently. CRI. To all you have faid against Humane Liberty, it is a sufficient Answer to observe that your Arguments proceed upon an erroneous Supposition, either of the Soul's being corporeal, or of abstract Ideas. And on the other hand, there is not need of much Inquiry to be convinced of two Points, than which none are more evident, more obvious, and more univerfally admitted by Men of all forts, learned or unlearned, in all Times and Places, to wit, that Man acts and is accountable for his Actions. Whatever Abstracters, Refiners, or Men prejudiced to a false Hypothesis may pretend, it is, if I mistake not, evident to every thinking Man of common Sense, that Humane Minds are fo far from being Engines or Foot-balls, acted upon and bandied about by corporeal Objects, without any inward Principle of Freedom or Action, that the only original true Notions that we have of Freedom, Agent, or Action, are obtained by reflecting on our felves, and the Operations of our own Minds. The Singularity and Credulity of Minute Philosophers, who fuffer themselves to be abused by the Paralogisms of three or four eminent Patriarchs of Infidelity in the last Age, is, I think, not to be matched; there being no Instance of bigotted Superstition, the Ringleaders whereof have been able to feduce their Followers more sint act mails and toy has placed openly

anie ov

openly and more widely from the plain Dictates of Nature and common Sense.

XXIV. ALC. It has been always an Objection against the Discoverers of Truth, that they depart from received Opinions. The Character of Singularity is a Tax on Free-thinking: And as such we most willingly bear it, and glory in it. A Genuine Philosopher is never modest in a false Sense, to the preferring Authority before Reason, or an old and common Opinion before a true one. Which false Modesty, as it discourages Men from treading in untrodden Paths, or striking out new Light, is above all other Qualities the greatest Enemy to Free-thinking. CRI. Authority in disputable Points will have its Weight with a judicious Mind, which yet will follow Evidence wherever it leads. Without preferring we may allow it a good Second to Reason. Your Gentlemen, therefore, of the Minute Philosophy, may spare a World of Common Place upon Reason, and Light, and Discoveries. We are not attached to Authority against Reason, nor afraid of untrodden Paths that lead to Truth, and are ready to follow a new Light when we are fure it is no ignis fatuus. Reason may oblige a Man to believe against his Inclinations; but why shou'd a Man quit salutary Notions for others not less unreasonable than pernicious? Your Schemes and Principles, and boafted Demonstrations have been at large proposed and examined. You have shifted your Notions, successively retreated from one Scheme to another, and in the End renounced them all. Your Objections have been treated in the same Manner, and with the fame Event. If we except all that relates to the particular Errors and Faults of private Persons, and Difficulties which, from the Nature of Things, we are not obliged to explain, it is furprifing to fee, after such magnificent Threats, how little remains, that

that can amount to a pertinent Objection against the Christian Religion. What you have produced has been tried by the fair Test of Reason; and though you shou'd hope to prevail by Ridicule when you cannot by Reason, yet in the upshot, I apprehend you will find it impracticable to destroy all Sense of Religion. Make your Countrymen ever fo vicious, ignorant, and profane, Men will still be disposed to look up to a supreme Being. Religion, right or wrong, will fubfift in some Shape or other, and fome worship there will furely be either of God or the Creature. As for your Ridicule, can any thing be more ridiculous, than to fee the most unmeaning Men of the Age set up for Free-thinkers, Men fo strong in Assertion, and yet so weak in Argument, Advocates for Freedom introducing a Fatality, Patriots trampling on the Laws of their Country, and Pretenders to Virtue. destroying the Motives of it? Let any impartial Man but cast an eye on the Opinions of the Minute Philosophers, and then say if any thing can be more ridiculous, than to believe fuch things, and at the fame time laugh at Credulity.

XXV. LYS. Say what you will, we have the Laughers on our fide: And as for your Reasoning I take it to be another Name for Sophistry. CRI. And I suppose by the same Rule you take your own Sophisms for Arguments. To speak plainly, I know no fort of Sophism that is not employ'd by Minute Philosophers against Religion. They are guilty of a Petitio Principii, in taking for granted that we believe Contradictions; of non Causa pro Causa, in affirming that uncharitable Feuds and Discords are the Estects of Christianity; of Ignoratio elenchi, in expecting Demonstration where we pretend only to Faith. If I was not afraid to offend the Delicacy of polite Ears, nothing were easier than to assign Instances of every kind of So-

Aa

philm,

THEMINUTE Dial. VII. 358 phism, which wou'd shew how skilful your own Philosophers are in the practice of that Sophistry you impute to others. EUPH. For my own part, if Sophistry be the Art or Faculty of deceiving other Men, I must acquit these Gentlemen of it. They feem to have led me a progress through Atheism, Libertinism, Enthusiasm, Fatalism, not to convince me of the Truth of any of them, fo much as to confirm me in my own way of Thinking. They have exposed their fairy Ware not to cheat but divert us. As I know them to be professed Masters of Ridicule, so in a serious sense I know not what to make of them. ALC. You do not know what to make of us! I shou'd be forry you did. He must be a superficial Philosopher that is foon fathomed.

XXVI. CRI. The ambiguous Character is, it feems, the fure way to Fame and Esteem in the learned World, as it stands constituted at present. When the ingenious Reader is at a loss to determine whether his Author be Atheist or Deist or Polytheift, Stoic or Epicurean, Sceptic or Dogmatist, Infidel or Enthusiast, in jest or in earnest, he concludes him without hesitation to be anigmatical and profound. In fact, it is true of the most admired Writers of the Age, That no Man alive can tell what to make of them, or what they would be at. ALC. We have among us Moles that dig deep under ground, and Eagles that foar out of fight. We can act all Parts and become all Opinions, putting them on or off with great freedom of Wit and Humour. EUPH. It feems then you are a pair of inscrutable, unfathomable, fashionable Philosophers. ALC. It cannot be denied. EUPH. But, I remember, you fet out with an open dogmatical Air, and talked of plain Principles and evident Reasoning, promised to make things as clear as Noon-day, to extirpate wrong Notions

Dial. VII. PHILOSOPHER. Notions and plant right in their stead. Soon after, you began to recede from your first Notions and adopt others: you advanced one while and retreated another, yielded and retracted, faid and unfaid: And after having followed you through fo many untrodden Paths and intricate Mazes I find my felf never the nearer. ALC. Did we not tell you the Gentlemen of our Sect are great Proficients in Raillery? EUPH. But, methinks, it is a vain Attempt, for a plain Man of any fettled Belief or Principles to engage with fuch flippery. fugitive, changeable Philosophers. It seems as if a Man shou'd stand still in the same place, while his Adversary chooses and changes his Situation. has full range and liberty to traverse the Field, and attack him on all fides and in all shapes, from a nearer or farther distance, on Horse-back or on Foot, in light or heavy Armour, in close Fight or with missive Weapons. ALC. It must be owned, a Gentleman hath great Advantage over a straitlaced Pedant or Bigot. EUPH. But after all, what am I the better for the Conversation of two such knowing Gentlemen; I hoped to have unlearned my Errors, and to have learned Truths from you, but, to my great disappointment, I do not find that I am either untaught or taught. ALC. To unteach Men their Prejudices is a difficult task: And this must first be done, before we can pretend to teach them the Truth. Besides, we have at prefent no time to prove and argue. EUPH. But suppose my Mind white Paper, and without being at any pains to extirpate my Opinions, or prove your own, only fay what you wou'd write thereon, or what you wou'd teach me in case I were teachable. Be for once in earnest, and let me know some one Conclusion of yours before we part; or I shall intreat Crito to violate the Laws of Hospitality towards those who have violated A 2 2 the the Laws of Philosophy, by hanging out false Lights to one benighted in Ignorance and Error. I appeal to you (said he turning to Crito) whether these Philosophical Knight-errants shou'd not be confined in this Castle of yours, till they make Reparation. Euphranor has Reason, said Crito, and my Sentence is that you remain here in durance, till you have done something towards satisfying the Engagement I am under, having promised, he shou'd know your Opinions from your selves, which you also agreed to.

XXVII. ALC. Since it must be so, I will now reveal what I take to be the Sum and Substance. the grand Arcanum and ultimate Conclusion of our Sect, and that in two Words, MANTA YMOAHYIE. CRI. You are then a downright Sceptic. But. Sceptic as you are, you own it, probable there is a God, certain that the Christian Religion is useful, possible it may be true, certain that if it be the Minute Philosophers are in a bad way. This being the Case, how can it be questioned what courfe a wife Man shou'd take? Whether the Principles of Christians or Infidels are truest may be made a Question, but which are safest can be none. Certainly if you doubt of all Opinions you must doubt of your own; and then, for ought you know, the Christian may be true. The more doubt, the more room there is for Faith, a Sceptic of all Men having the least Right to demand Evidence. But, whatever uncertainty there may be in other Points, thus much is certain: either there is or is not a God: there is or is not a Revelation: Man either is or is not and Agent: The Soul is or is not Immortal. If the Negatives are not fure, the Affirmatives are possible. If the Negatives are improbable, the Affirmatives are probable. In Proportion, as any of our ingenious Men finds himfelf unable to prove any one of these Negatives,

Dial. VII. PHILOSOPHER.

361

he hath grounds to suspect he may be mistaken. A Minute Philosopher, therefore, that wou'd act a consistent part, shou'd have the Dissidence, the Modesty, and the Timidity, as well as the Doubts, of a Sceptic; not pretend to an Ocean of Light, and then lead us to an Abyss of Darkness. If I have any Notion of Ridicule, this is most ridiculous. But your ridiculing what, for ought you know, may be true, I can make no sense of. It is neither acting as a wise Man with regard to your own Interest, nor as a good Man with regard to

that of your Country.

XXVIII. Tully faith somewhere, aut undique religionem tolle aut usquequaque conserva: Either let us have no Religion at all or let it be respected. If any fingle Instance can be shewn of a People that ever prospered without some Religion, or if there be any Religion better than the Christian, propose it in the grand Assembly of the Nation to change our Constitution, and either live without Religion, or introduce that new Religion. A Sceptic, as well as other Men, is Member of a Community, and can diffinguish between Good and Evil, Natural or Political. Be this then his Guide as a Patriot, though he be no Christian. Or, if he doth not pretend even to this discernment, let him not pretend to correct or alter what he knows nothing of: Neither let him that only doubts behave as if he cou'd demonstrate. Timagoras is wont to fay, I find my Country in possession of certain Tenets: they appear to have an ufeful Tendency, and, as fuch, are encouraged by the Legislature; they make a main part of our Constitution: I do not find these Innovators can disprove them, or substitute things more useful and certain in their stead: out of regard therefore to the Good of Mankind, and the Laws of my Country, I shall acquiesce in them. I do not say Timagoras is a Christian, but I reckon him a Patriot. Not to enquire in a point of such great concern is folly, but it is still a higher degree of folly to condemn without inquiring. Lyficles seemed heartily tired of this Conversation. It is now late, said he to Alciphron, and all things are ready for your departure. Every one hath his own way of Thinking; and it is as impossible for me to adopt another Man's, as to make his Complexion and Features mine. Alciphron pleaded that having complied with Euphranor's Conditions, they were now at Liberty: And Euphranor answered that, all he desired having been to know their Te-

nets, he had nothing further to pretend.

XXIX. The Philosophers being gone, I observed to Crito how unaccountable it was, that Men fo eafy to confute shou'd yet be so difficult to con-This, said Crito, is accounted for by Ariflotle, who tells us that Arguments have not an Effect on all Men, but only to them whose Minds are prepared by Education and Custom, as Land is for Seed *. Make a Point never fo clear, it is great odds, that a Man, whose Habits and the Bent of whose Mind lie a contrary way, shall be unable to comprehend it. So weak a thing is Reason in Competition with Inclination. I replied, this anfwer might hold with respect to other Persons and other Times: but when the question was of inquifitive Men, in an Age wherein Reason was so much cultivated, and Thinking so much in vogue, it did not feem fatisfactory. I have known it remarked, faid Crito, by a Man of much Observation, that in the present Age Thinking is more talk'd of but less practifed than in ancient times; and that fince the Revival of Learning Men have read much and wrote much but thought little: infomuch that with us to think closely and justly is the least part of a learned

^{*} Ethic. ad Nicom. 1. 10. c. 9.

Dial. VII. PHILOSOPHER. learned Man, and none at all of a polite Man. The Free-thinkers, it must be owned, make great Pretensions to Thinking, and yet they shew but little Exactness in it. A lively Man, said he, and what the World calls a Man of fense are often deftitute of this Talent, which is not a meer gift of Nature, but must be improved and perfected, by much Attention and Exercise on very different Subjects, a thing of more pains and time than the hafty Men of parts in our Age care to take. Such were the Sentiments of a judicious Friend of mine: And, if you are not already fufficiently convinced of these Truths, you need only cast an eye on the dark and confused but, neverthless admired, Writers of this famous Sect: And then you will be able to judge, whether those who are led by Men of such wrong Heads can have very good ones of their own. Such, for instance, was Spinofa the great Leader of our modern Infidels, in whom are to be found many Schemes and Notions much admired and followed of late years: fuch as undermining Religion under the pretence of vindicating and explaining it: The maintaining it not necessary to believe in Christ according to the Flesh: The persuading Men that Miracles are to be understood only in a spiritual and allegorical sense: That Vice is not so bad a thing as we are apt to think: That Men are meer Machines impell'd by fatal Necessity. I have heard, said I, Spinosa represented as a Man of close Argument and Demonstration. He did, replied Crito, demonstrate; but it was after such a manner, as any one may demonstrate any thing. Allow a Man the privilege to make his own Definitions of common Words, and it will be no hard matter for him to infer Conclusions, which in one sense shall be true and in another false, at once seeming Paradoxes and manifest Truisms. For example, let but Spinosa define natural Right to be natural Power, Aa4

and he will easily demonstrate, that whatever a Man can do he hath a Right to do *. Nothing can be plainer than the folly of this Proceeding: but our Pretenders to the lumen siccum are often so passionately prejudiced against Religion, as to swallow the grossest Nonsense and Sophistry of weak and wicked Writers for Demonstration.

XXX. And so great a Noise do these Men make, with their thinking, reasoning, and demonfirating, as to prejudice fome well-meaning Persons against all Use and improvement of Reason. Honest Demea, having seen a Neighbour of his ruined by the Vices of a Free-thinking Son, contracted fuch a Prejudice against Thinking, that he wou'd not fuffer his own to read Euclid, being told it might teach him to think; till a Friend convinced him the epidemical Distemper was not Thinking, but only the want and affectation of it. I know an eminent Free-thinker, who never goes to bed, without a Gallon of Wine in his Belly, and is fure to replenish before the Fumes are off his Brain, by which means he has not had one fober Thought thefe feven Years; another, that wou'd not for the World lose the Privilege and Reputation of Freethinking, who games all Night, and lies in bed all Day: And as for the Outfide or Appearance of Thought in that meagre Minute Philosopher Ibycus, it is an Effect, not of thinking, but of carking, cheating and writing in an Office. Strange, faid he, that fuch Men shou'd set up for Free-thinkers! But it is yet more strange that other Men shou'd be out of Conceit with Thinking and Reasoning, for the fake of fuch Pretenders. I answered, that fome good Men conceived an Opposition between Reason and Religion, Faith and Knowledge, Nature and Grace; and that, confequently, the way

^{*} Tractat. Politic. c. 2.

to promote Religion was, to quench the light of Nature, and discourage all rational Inquiry.

XXXI. How right the Intentions of these Men may be, replied Crito, I shall not fay; but furely their Notions are very wrong. Can any thing be more dishonourable to Religion, than the reprefenting it as an unreasonable, unnatural, ignorant Institution? God is the Father of all Lights whether natural or revealed. Natural Concupiscence is one thing, and the Light of Nature another. You cannot therefore argue from the Former against the Latter: Neither can you from Science falfely fo called, against real Knowledge. Whatever therefore is faid of the one in Holy Scripture is not to be interpreted of the other. I insisted, that Humane Learning in the hands of Divines, had from time to time, created great Disputes and Divisions in the Church. As abstracted Metaphysics, replied Crito, have always had a Tendency to produce Difputes among Christians, as well as other Men, so it shou'd seem that genuine Truth and Knowledge wou'd allay this Humour, which makes Men facrifice the disputed Duties of Peace and Charity to disputable Notions. After all, said I, whatever may be faid for Reason, it is plain, the Sceptics and Infidels of the Age are not to be cured by it. I will not dispute this Point, said Crito; in order to cure a Distemper, you shou'd consider what produced it. Had Men reasoned themselves into a wrong Opinion, one might hope to reason them out of it. But this is not the Case; the Infidelity of most Minute Philosophers seem an Effect of very different Motives from thought and Reason, little Incidents, Vanity, Difgust, Humour, Inclination, without the least affistance from Reason, are often known to make Infidels. Where the general Tendency of a Doctrine is disagreeable, the Mind is prepared to relish and improve every thing that with

THEMINUTE Dial. VII. 266 with the least Pretence seems to make against it. Hence the coarse Manners of a Country Curate, the politeness of a Chaplain, the Wit of a Minute Philosopher, a Jest, a Song, a Tale can serve inflead of a Reason for Infidelity. Bupalus preferred a Rake in the Church, and then made use of him as an Argument against it. Vice, Indolence, Faction, and Fashion produce Minute Philosophers, and meer Petulancy not a few. Who then can expeet a thing fo irrational and capricious shou'd yield to Reason? It may nevertheless, be worth while to argue against such Men, and expose their Fallacies, if not for their own fake, yet for the fake of others; as it may lessen their Credit and prevent the growth of their Sect, by removing a Prejudice in their Favour, which fometimes inclines others as well as themselves to think they have made a Monopoly of Human Reason.

XXXII. The most general Pretext which looks like Reason is taken from the Variety of Opinions about Religion. This is a resting Stone to a lazy and superficial mind: But one of more Spirit and a juster way of Thinking, makes it a Step whence he looks about, and proceeds to examine, and compare the differing Inflitutions of Religion. He will observe, which of these is the most sublime and rational in its Doctrines, most venerable in its Mysteries, most useful in its Precepts, most decent in its Worship? Which created the noblest Hopes, and most worthy views? He will consider their Rife and Progress; which oweth least to Humane Arts or Arms? Which flatters the Senses and gross Inclinations of Men.? Which adorns and improves the most excellent Part of our Nature? Which hath been propagated in the most wonderful Manner? Which hath surmounted the greatest Difficulties, or shew'd the most disinterested Zeal and Sincerity in its Professors? He will inquire,

which

Dial. VII. PHILOSOPHER.

367

which best accords with Nature and History? He. will confider, what favours of the World, and what looks like Wisdom from above? He will be careful to separate Humane Allay from that which is Divine; and upon the whole, form his Judgment like a reasonable Free-thinker. But instead of taking fuch a rational Course, one of these hasty Sceptics shall conclude without demurring, there is no wisdom in Politics, no Honesty in Dealings. no Knowledge in Philosophy, no Truth in Religion: And all by one and the same fort of Inference, from the numerous Examples of Folly. Knavery, Ignorance, and Error, which are to be met with in the World. But, as those who are unknowing in every thing elfe, imagine themselves sharp-fighted in Religion, this learned Sophism is often levelled against Christianity.

XXXIII. In my Opinion, he, that wou'd convince an Infidel who can be brought to Reason, ought in the first place clearly to convince him of the Being of a God, it feeming to me, that any Man who is really a Theift, cannot be an Enemy to the Christian Religion: And that the Ignorance or Disbelief of this fundamental Point is that which at bottom constitutes the Minute Philosopher. I imagine they, who are acquainted with the great Authors in the Minute Philosophy, need not be told of this. The being of a God is capable of clear Proof, and a proper Object of Humane Reafon: whereas the Mysteries of his Nature and indeed whatever there is of Mystery in Religion, to endeavour to explain, and prove by Reason, is a yain Attempt. It is sufficient if we can shew there is nothing abfurd or repugnant in our Belief of those Points, and, instead of framing Hypotheses to explain them, we use our Reason only for answering the Objections brought against them. But on all Occasions, we ought to distinguish the seri-

368 THE MINUTE Dial. VII. ous, modest, ingenuous Man of Sense, who hath Scruples about Religion, and behaves like a prudent Man in doubt, from the Minute Philosophers, those profane and conceited Men, who must needs proselyte others to their own Doubts. When one of this Stamp presents himself, we shou'd consider what species he is of: Whether a first or a secondhand Philosopher, a Libertine, Scorner, or Sceptic? Each Character requiring a peculiar Treatment. Some Men are too ignorant to be humble, without which there can be no Docility: But though a Man must in some degree have thought. and confidered to be capable of being convinced, yet it is possible the most ignorant may be laugh'd out of his Opinions. I knew a Woman of Sense reduce two Minute Philosophers, who had long been a Nusance to the Neighbourhood, by taking her Cue from their predominant Affectations. one fet up for being the most incredulous Man upon Earth, the other for the most unbounded Freedom. She observed to the first, that he who had Credulity fufficient to truft the most valuable Things, his Life and Fortune, to his Apothecary and Lawyer, ridiculously affected the Character of Incredulous, by refusing to trust his Soul, a Thing in his own account but a meer Trifle to his Parish-Priest. The other, being what you call a Beau, she made fensible how absolute a Slave he was in point of Dress, to him the most important thing in the World, while he was earnestly contending for a Liberty of thinking, with which he never troubled his Head; and how much more it concerned and became him to affert an Independency on Fashion, and obtain Scope for his Genius, where it was best qualified to exert it self. The Minute Philofophers at first hand are very few, and considered in themselves, of small consequence: But their Followers, who pin their Faith upon them, are numerous

Dial. VII. PHILOSOPHER.

369

numerous, and not less confident than credulous; there being something in the Air and Manner of these second-hand Philosophers, very apt to disconcert a Man of Gravity and Argument, and much more difficult to be born than the Weight of their Objections.

XXXIV. Crito having made an end, Euphranor declared it to be his Opinion, that it wou'd much conduce to the public Benefit, if, instead of difcouraging Free-thinking, there was erected in the midft of this Free Country a Dianoetic Academy. or Seminary for Free-thinkers, provided with retired Chambers, and Galleries, and shady Walks and Groves, where, after feven Years spent in Silence and Meditation, a Man might commence a genuine Free-thinker, and from that time forward. have Licence to think what he pleased, and a Badge to distinguish him from Counterfeits. In good earnest, said Crito, I imagine that Thinking is the great Desideratum of the present Age; and that the real Cause of whatever is amis, may justly be reckoned the general Neglect of Education, in those who need it most, the People of Fashion. What can be expected where those who have the most Influence, have the least Sense, and those who are fure to be followed, fet the worst Example? Where Youth fo uneducated are yet fo forward? Where Modesty is esteemed Pusillanimity, and a Deference to Years, Knowledge, Religion, Laws, want of Sense and Spirit? Such untimely Growth of Genius wou'd not have been valued or encouraged by the wife Men of Antiquity; whose Sentiments on this Point are fo ill fuited to the Genius of our Times, that it is to be feared modern Ears cou'd not bear them. But however ridiculous fuch Maxims might feem to our British Youth, who are so capable and fo forward to try Experiments, and mend the Constitution of their Country, I believe

THE MINUTE, &c. Dial. VII. it will be admitted by Men of Sense, that if the Governing part of Mankind wou'd in these Days, for Experiment's fake, consider themselves in that old Homerical Light as Pastors of the People, whose Duty it was to improve their Flock, they wou'd foon find that this is to be done by an Education very different from the Modern, and otherquess Maxims than those of the Minute Philosophy. If our Youth were really inur'd to Thought and Reflexion, and an Acquaintance with the excellent Writers of Antiquity, we shou'd soon see that licentious Humour, vulgarly called Free-thinking, banished from the Presence of Gentlemen, together with Ignorance and ill Tafte; which as they are inseparable from Vice, so Men follow Vice for the fake of Pleasure, and fly from Virtue through an abhorrence of Pain. Their Minds therefore betimes thou'd be formed and accustomed to receive Pleasure and Pain from proper Objects, or, which is the fame thing, to have their Inclinations and Aversions rightly placed. Καλῶς χαίζειν η μισειν. This according to Plato and Aristotle, was the open warding. the right Education *. And those who, in their own Minds, their Health or their Fortunes, feel the curfed Effects of a wrong one, wou'd do well to consider, they cannot better make amends for what was amiss in themselves, than by preventing the same in their Posterity. While Crito was saying this, Company came in, which put an end to our Conversation.

* Plato in Protag. & Aristot. ethic ad Nicom. 1. 2. c. 2. & l. 10. c. 9.

FINIS.



Just publisted,

PRivate Thoughts, in two Parts, complete. Part First: Upon Religion, digested in twelve Articles, with practical Resolutions formed thereupon. Part IId: Upon a Christian Life; or necessary Directions for its Beginning and Progress upon Earth, in Order to its final Persection in the Beatifick Vision. By the Right Revd. Father in God, William Beveridge, late Lord Bishop of St. Asaph. The Seventeenth Edition. Price bound 2s. 8d. half-penny.

Deism refuted; or the Truth of Christianity demonstrated by infallible Proof from four Rules, which are incompatible to any Imposture which can possibly be: In a Letter to a Friend. By a

Lover of Truth. Price 6d. half-penny.

The Case of the Jews considered, with respect to Christianity. By the Author of Deism resuted. Price 10d.

The Evidences of Christianity. By Joseph Addison, Esq; Price 3d.

N. B. Good Allowance will be made to those who take a Number to disperse.

Bishop Hall's Portraiture of a True Christian. Price 1d. or 9d. per Dozen.

The Gamester: A Tragedy. By Edward Moore.

Author of the Fables for the Fair-Sex.

Boadicia: A Tragedy. By Mr. Glover, Author of Leonidas.

An Abridgment of Mr. Locke's Essay, concerning Human Understanding. Seventh Edition. Price bound 2s. 2d.

